Interview with Harold H. Saunders

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

DR. HAROLD H. SAUNDERS

Interviewed by: Thomas Stern

Initial interview date: November 24, 1993

[NOTE: This transcript has not been edited by Dr. Saunders.]

Q: Hal, I am delighted to have this opportunity to speak to you on your career in foreign affairs and I express the thanks of all of us for your contribution. I should note that I intend to make your interviews somewhat different from other oral histories because you have been involved in many major foreign policy issues which have been recorded minutely by both participants and observers. I will therefore, in our conversation, try to focus on the process which was used for to reach the agreements or disagreements and, of course, your personal involvement. I will not stress any specific events because, as I have suggested, much has been written already about those. For anyone reading this oral history, it should be noted that you, yourself, have written extensively (e.g. The Other Walls: the Arab-Israeli Peace Process in a Global Perspective, American Hostages in Iran: The Conduct of a Crisis, Conversations with Harold Saunders-US Policy Toward the Middle East, a chapter in The Psychodynamics of International Relations, co- edited The Middle East in Global Perspective). I hope not to duplicate any of your writings, at least not extensively. Readers of this oral history may wish to refer to your previous written comments to get a full flavor of your contribution to US foreign policy in the 1961-81 period.

Let me begin, however, with the usual question that I pose to all interviewees. I would like to know something about your background and how your interest in foreign policy developed.

SAUNDERS: I was born and grew up in Philadelphia. I attended the Germantown Academy, which was supposedly the oldest private school in continuous operation in the United States. It was founded in 1760. I received a very good education at the Academy, particularly in English.

I consider that the most important part of my background that led me into the foreign affairs field was my college education. It was inter-disciplinary. Specifically, I joined the "American Civilization" program at Princeton, majoring in English. That program exposed me to a number of disciplines which permitted me to study American literature and culture in a broad context. It raised my awareness to the sensitivity to the complexity of human interactions, which are the substance of literature. After graduating from Princeton in 1952, I went to Yale where I received my Ph.D. in American studies—literature, art, history, architecture, sociology, political science—in 1956. Those four years were also spent in an inter-disciplinary program. I emphasize that aspect of my education because it taught me to look at problems from different perspectives. When you work for the National Security Council and the President of the United States, it is vitally important that you look at an issue not only through the eyes of a diplomat or a military officer, but through as many eyes as possible. My dissertation at Yale was in American intellectual history and specifically on the processes of social interaction; that stood me in good stead later in the 1980s while I was participating on the Middle East process. After a while, I suddenly realized that I had been sensitized to see events as interactive political processes in a social setting. I attribute that perspective to my education and particularly my experiences at Yale.

When I received my degree in 1956, I was twenty-five and a half years old. That made me eligible for military service. At the time, CIA had a junior officer training program

which had a relationship with the US Air Force. That meant that, although you would be initially employed by the CIA, you then would be sent to the Air Force for basic training, followed by Officer Candidate School. This cooperative arrangement permitted the Air Force to waive its usual requirement that OCS be preceded by four years of enlisted duty. So I joined CIA and then went into the Air Force where after a year of training I was given a commission as a Lieutenant. I was then assigned to Andrews Air Force base in Washington where I spent another year. I did not join CIA just because of the arrangement it had with the Air Force; I had intended to join CIA as a career. During graduate school, I rejected the notion of entering the private business sector; I wanted to have a career in the public sector. I had an interest in teaching, but I had come to the conclusion that I would not have much to contribute until I had gained some experience outside of academia. That led me to seek possible employment opportunities which would permit me to use the analytical skills that I had honed in graduate school. I had a friend at the Yale Law School who led me to the CIA and its junior officer training program. That seemed tailor-made for me because it would have permitted me to use my analytical talents in a field—foreign affairs—which interested me. I had no background in foreign affairs beyond the courses I had taken in American diplomatic history, but the subject matter intrigued me.

So I came into the government, as many did, with some skills that I applied to substantive issues. Others, of course, came to foreign affairs naturally, having been brought up as children of missionaries or diplomats. They had lived in foreign lands, spoke other languages, knew other cultures intimately. My father was a self-made architectural engineer; he had been in France during World War I, but spent his life working for architectural firms in Philadelphia. So I had no particular background in foreign affairs, but developed an interest in it during my years in academia. I did have a great-uncle who had been the Quartermaster General of the Army of the Cumberland during the Civil War; after that he headed a section of the Pension Bureau. My family still has a lovely ceramic bowl which was given to him by his Bureau colleagues on his 80th birthday—there was not such thing as mandatory retirement in the American government of the latter part of the

19th Century. That great-uncle was the only member of the family who had any experience in the Federal Government. So my career took place in institutions foreign to my family traditions.

After a year in the Air Force, I was detailed back to CIA. That was the understanding when I had originally joined the Agency. Like many of us who served in the military, I had an opportunity to shoulder responsibility at a fairly early age. I acquired a sense for personnel policy, leadership, personal relationships. All of that was very useful, particularly for someone like myself who had spent all of his life in a classroom. My first six months in CIA was spent in further training being prepared to work in the analytical side of the Agency rather than on the clandestine operations side. It was the custom in the mid-1950s to select one new analyst to become a junior staff assistant to the Deputy Director of the Agency. That Deputy was responsible for all the analytical work done in the Agency by the various geographic and functional bureaus. I was fortunate enough to be the choice in 1958, and served a year as staff assistant to the Deputy Director, General Cabbell. It was a marvelous opportunity to have an overview of the foreign affairs apparatus of the U.S. Government. The Agency inter-acted with other agencies in the foreign affairs field as well as the Legislative Branch. Our office also screened all cables and decided which should be read by the then Director of the Agency, Allen Dulles.

Since Allen Dulles had a brother who happened to be the Secretary of State at the time, the inter-action between the two institutions was very interesting. My exposure to that relationship gave me some insights into a rare situation. I also had an opportunity to see CIA from the top down as well as from the top out. Allen Dulles used to have frequent breakfasts with Joe Alsop and other major columnists as well as key Congressional leaders. That gave me some exposure to the larger political dimensions of the Agency and foreign affairs in general that I could not have gotten had I worked in one of the regional or functional bureaus. It was heady stuff for a young fellow! That era for the late 1950s was an intense one in the Cold War. The clandestine operations were very active; I got a

glimpse of that side of the US government early in my career. In general, the late 1950s were a very active period for the CIA around the world in many ways.

After a year working for General Cabbell, I was assigned to the Office of Current Intelligence and stayed there for about 18 months. There I worked on North East Asian Affairs and particularly on Japan. I had no particular reason for specializing in that area, but that was where a vacancy happened to be and it appeared to be an interesting assignment. It served to further enhance my experience as an analyst. My primary responsibility was to write items on Japan for the daily and weekly publications. We had a senior analyst for Japan who supervised my work. At the desks next to mine were the analysts for Korea and Taiwan.

Occasionally, I met with some Department of State people. At my level, the relationships were good. Of course, we were not senior enough to become involved in turf battles. Our contacts with State were primarily to compare analyses and I think we worked well together. I had become acquainted with some Foreign Service Officers while I was at Yale. I had lived on the third floor of home of one of the Yale faculty members. One of my floor mates was a Foreign Service Officer, Philip Dale, who was assigned to Yale to learn Japanese. Through him, I became quite friendly with some other Foreign Service Officers —Kingdon Swayne was one—who were at Yale at the same time. One was a relatively senior officer in USIA—Cliff Forster—, whom I met again later in my career.

While I was working as a staff assistant in the Deputy Director's office, I met Bob Komer who was an assistant to the Deputy Director for Intelligence, Bob Amery. Bob Komer was the Agency's representative on the NSC Planning Board. Under President Eisenhower, the NSC was a large organization. It included a Planning Board and an Operations Coordinating Board. I had provided staff support to Komer on a number of occasions so that we became acquainted. While on the Japan desk, we had a change in administrations. Mac Bundy became President Kennedy's NSC Advisor. He asked Komer to join the NSC staff which had been considerably reduced by the new administration.

Kennedy had in effect dismantled the Eisenhower NSC structure and functions. In September 1961, the staff was expanded to a small degree. It was then that Bob Komer asked me whether I would be interested in working for him. I accepted and CIA worked out a detail assignment for me, which lasted for seven years until 1968. I had discussed the possibility of actually transferring to the NSC staff at earlier times, but the Agency wisely counseled me to stay on its rolls at least until after the 1968 elections. That was a very decent action on the part of the Agency.

The NSC assignment became my first step into the foreign policy development work. I never returned to CIA, but the fact that I was an alumnus of that organization proved to be very significant and useful later on, especially during the Kissinger shuttle era, when as one of the members of the very small negotiating team, I became responsible for the analytical underpinnings for Kissinger's mediation efforts. I relied then on various elements of the intelligence community and especially CIA. Joe Sisco and Roy Atherton, the other members of the team, relied on the Department of State's resources. I am sure that having been an alumnus gave me greater credibility in CIA; it was always interested in assisting policy makers, but since I had been “one of them”, that made it much easier for everybody. During one of the shuttle periods, I wrote a note for Kissinger's signature to Bill Colby, then the CIA Director, asking for some CIA assistance. Colby wrote back saying anything that I wanted from CIA would be gladly delivered. Beyond that, during the shuttles, Kissinger would ask me to contact the local CIA Station Chief. For example, it was through the Station Chief in Saudi Arabia, that we were able to initiate and maintain a dialogue with the younger Saudi princes, one of whom became the Saudi Foreign Minister and the other the head of Saudi intelligence organization. Kissinger, who was dealing with King Faisal at the time, wanted to make sure that other members of the family also understood what he was doing and why. He asked me to develop those relationships. Working on the NSC staff and for Kissinger helped, but I am sure that being an “alumnus” also helped in obtaining maximum cooperation from the Agency's staff.

The NSC in 1961 was “a project in progress”. By September 1961, there were 9-11 substantive officers on the staff. There is a story, which some have characterized as apocryphal, but which may be true, that Mac Bundy, upon becoming the NSC Adviser, had decided to do away with all the residual bureaucracy left over from the previous administration. Allegedly, he did away even with the mail room. Then, after a while, he began to wonder why he did not receive any papers. Agencies, like the State Department, would tell him that such and such a paper had been sent to him. Mac Bundy would say that he never received. Then someone told him that there was no one on the NSC staff to distribute the mail. That story may not be true, but it is indicative of the length that Mac Bundy went to change the NSC from what it had been. He insisted that his staff be imbued with the idea that the NSC would not be a bureaucratic structure as had been true in the Eisenhower period. I had opportunities to remember that emphasis on non-bureaucracy several times in later years and came to the conclusion that the Eisenhower NSC staff was not established and maintained to develop foreign policy, but was intended to serve some other purpose. I have asked people like Andy Goodpaster and others who worked directly for President Eisenhower to explain the system in that administration. Goodpaster's thought that because Ike was an Army officer, he used the NSC structure to “exercise the troops”. It was not an attempt to keep the bureaucracy busy, as Kissinger was accused of doing later, but it was an effort to give officials some practice, as a general would do in field maneuvers, so that when a real life situation would arise, the bureaucracy would know how to respond. In effect, Eisenhower demanded policy “dry runs”. I don't want to denigrate the process; it was just an approach that a President brought up in a military tradition used to keep a bureaucracy on its toes. He wanted to make sure that his “officers” had studied a problem that he would be personally wrestling with so that when he reached the time for a decision, he had a lot of people around him who had considered the same issue thoroughly and would therefore understand why he had reached a certain conclusion which they could accept rather than having it forced down their throats. It was a way to make sure that his “troops” were with him and would support him after he had reached a decision. According to Goodpaster, that is what the NSC structure was

all about and why it was as large as it was. Policy was actually made in the Oval Office, with Goodpaster having recorded personally the decisions, since he was the “notetaker” in high-level meetings. But by the time the decision had been made, the NSC and the rest of the bureaucracy was fully prepared, having studied the issue thoroughly before the Presidential decision. It is important to understand the Eisenhower NSC because the Kennedy administration created a mythology about the NSC in order to radically change what it was and to justify a whole new concept. Mac Bundy swept away all that the NSC was and staffed it only with 9-11 professionals. As I mentioned, it was increased slightly later in September 1961, but not greatly. When I joined the staff, each of the substantive staff had broad responsibilities. Komer, for example, covered the Middle East and Africa. He was also involved with Bill Bundy, then at the Pentagon, in a review of the military assistance program. That was not a country by country program review, but an examination of the basic concept. All the NSC staff would become involved in the examination of some world-wide issue at one time or another, so that each senior staff member had a very broad mandate.

My job was to support Komer on a different number of issues that had been assigned to him. I went to meetings, briefed him on new information as it became available and drafted letters for the President's signature to other heads of state like Nasser. We would sometimes receive the drafts written by the Department of State, which attracted the often heard criticisms that those drafts were written by bureaucrats who had no concept of Presidential tone or perspective. As I became more familiar with the work and the rest of the staff, I began gradually to become more and more involved in Middle East, South Asian and North African issues.

When it came to military and economic assistance, which were very important foreign policy tools in the early 1960s, it was a program that was seen within a larger context. These assistance programs were directed to “nation building”, a slogan used frequently then. That is to say, we would ask how assistance would contribute to a country's ability to develop adequate security forces and how it might foster the country's economic

development. We tried very hard to develop military assistance programs designed specifically to bolster a country's defensive capability without running the risk of damaging the country's economy and development. We also looked at the possibility of using the military forces to assist in the economic development effort. “Civic action”, as some of the programs became to be called, could not be expected to make major contributions, but it was a significant conceptual goal. For example, we used military forces in Iran for literacy training; in Indonesia, they were used to build farm-to-market roads. It was a concept that Bobby Kennedy also used in his counter-insurgency efforts. I remember that, during this period, a couple of papers were written which traced “civic action” back to the American revolution. So the concept was not new, but our emphasis of it was new and the concept played a vital role in countering the philosophy of Mao Zedong and Che Guevara. As far as economic assistance programs were concerned, in the early 1960s, we still emphasized economic development. It was a fertile period for development economists like Lucien Pye and the Harvard group. The latter came from the Institute for Economic Development and it had teams in several foreign countries like Iran and Pakistan. Those groups worked for the host countries developing economic growth strategies. It was a period that saw the building of an ethos and of an intellectual framework for the determination of economic development strategies. AID was led by the same kinds of people. Some of the senior officials, like Hollis Chenery, had worked with the Harvard group and intellectually approached economic development in the same terms. There was a sense in the early 1960s that there were concepts and doctrines which could bring economic development to a Third World country. In the part of the world I was working on—Southern Asia—, these concepts were reinforced by the work of World Bank consortia. They marshaled the largest amount of resources ever made available to India and Pakistan and probably to any country. These resource transfers were based on a real philosophy of economic development.

We had a sense that economic development was an important instrument in the maturation of the political process in countries. Walt Rostow, who was Bundy's deputy

on the NSC staff and later Director of the Policy Planning Staff of the Department of State, had written a book in the late 1950s on the stages of economic growth. That work became part of the intellectual context of the period. The first book that Walt wrote after leaving government was on the various political stages that a country experiences as it matures. I don't think that is entirely accidental. During the early 1960s, we did have a sense that economic development had to go hand-in-hand with political maturation. That concept led people to believe that economic development could be a vital link to broaden citizen participation in the political process, which would lead the establishment of what we today call “democratic institutions”. It was clear to many people in the early 1960s that there was a linkage between economic and political development and our assistance programs were in part formulated with that objective in mind. We did not, however, provide economic assistance with political “strings”. We did ask whether the Shah, for example, could afford the kind of military modernization program he had in mind if he were to also meet his economic development targets. But by and large, there was no political price that we tried to extract from a foreign country in exchange for economic assistance. We might on occasions when a critical vote would be upcoming in the UN remind a country of all the assistance we had provided. I do recall Mac Bundy saying once, when the question of CIA devoting some resources to effect the outcome of an election in a foreign country, that the US government was no longer in that business. So in general, we were not seeking change in governmental leadership when we provided assistance although we all recognized that a rural development program in Iran, for example, would have political impact at some stage. Literacy program might well have political significance. But these were possible consequences that were foreseen, but the programs were not developed with specific political outcomes in mind.

I should note that in the Kennedy administration, the White House involvement in many issues was quite informal, but very extensive. As I mentioned, the NSC had only 9-11 professionals, so that there was very little bureaucratic structure. The absence of strict formal processes permitted, for example, Komer to be involved in budget deliberations

while they were still being debated in DoD. That enabled him to raise at the White Hose levels substantive issues as they were being debated at lower levels. He then, through his participation of agency and inter-agency task forces, could bring the White House point of view to bear before any hard positions could be taken by the bureaucracy. In fact, this informal operating style engendered a close collegial atmosphere with people in the Bureau of the Budget and other government agencies. Our offices were on the third floor of the old Executive office building. The International Division of BoB was one floor above us. We were constantly going to each other's offices. That Division was in very close contact with people in the foreign affairs agencies. For example, BoB examiners sat in on budget hearings in the Agency for International Development on economic assistance and in meetings on military assistance. The Director of the International Division was, at the time, Ken Hansen; he and Komer worked together on many inter-agency task forces. There was no formal process that required White House participation such as existed during the Kissinger period, when, for example, a system analysis staff was created. During the Kennedy days, the process was much more informal, producing a much more intellectual framework. The issues that were developed by agency or inter-agency task forces would be sent for determination to some higher level group, chaired by different senior officials depending on the nature of the issues. But the maintenance of the informal contacts and the participation of White House staffers in various task forces provided a significant exchange of views and a broad sharing of information.

In the Johnson era, the task forces were regionally oriented under the chairmanship of the relevant State assistant secretary. I participated as they were formed. Johnson felt somewhat uncomfortable with the free wheeling style that had been the hallmark of the Kennedy administration. He established a more disciplined NSC process along more classic lines. The NSC had a three tier system. The bottom tier consisted of the professionals chaired by a State assistant secretary. Above that was a review level at the deputy secretary level chaired by the NSC adviser. The final level was the NSC council chaired by the President. I was the NSC representative on the NEA first level committees.

Q: Let me ask you a little about your personal involvement in this early period in Middle East policy. How did you get involved?

SAUNDERS: Until 1967, my role was essentially staff support for Bob Komer. I mentioned earlier that I had first met Bob when I was the special assistant to the Deputy Director for Intelligence at CIA. Bob was then a senior official who represented the Agency on the Intelligence Planning Board which had been established in the Eisenhower administration. I learned then that he was always fully prepared for anything that he undertook. He asked me on a number of occasions to find a lot of unusual material and information in preparation for some of the Planning Board meetings. It was that association that led to his offer to come to join him in his NSC office in September 1961. The first thing to note about Bob was his broad network throughout the bureaucracy which he had developed during his service in the CIA and then well beyond the Agency while serving on the Planning Board. He had worked with all the key officials in the foreign affairs community. Secondly, it must be noted that the Kennedy administration encouraged an independent-minded NSC staff; that is one that had an independent perspective which could assist in the development of a Presidential policy, not one made up in the normal course of bureaucratic work. The senior NSC staffers were mandated to foster new approaches to old problems in order to produce a “Kennedy” policy. That required us to confront the bureaucracy and to show a goodly amount of disrespect for its product. We tried through that approach to change any set patterns of thought and approaches. That, of course, also required us on the NSC to think differently and to propose new concepts, many of which were quite extreme. We fully expected that many would be rejected, but by proposing them we hoped to force the bureaucracy to become more innovative. So Komer reached out in new ways, confronted the bureaucracy with new ideas, many of them attributed to the President or at least as a response to a Presidential inquiry. Bob had a dynamic personal style which should little regard for stepping on people's toes or for any protocol requirements. It is well known that the Kennedy White House had very little regard for hierarchy as illustrated by Presidential phone calls to State Department desk officers.

Thirdly, I learned from Bob to look around the bureaucracy to find a kindred spirit on a specific issue, particularly someone who had some innovative ideas; it didn't make any difference where that person might have been on the organization chart. He would find those people and encouraged me to do the same thing. He then would incorporate some of their ideas into NSC papers and play them back to the leadership of the organizations from which the ideas had originally stemmed—at lower levels. That became a standard practice. Bob also had an attitude that was not always welcomed by others because it seemed disrespectful, confrontational and irreverent. But he had some real allies in various Cabinet departments like Bill Bundy in Defense who got to know Komer early in the administration's tenure when it undertook a world wide security assistance review. Harriman, Chester Bowles and Walt Rostow in the State Department were also Komer allies. Bob had good relations with the Assistant Secretary for NEA and some of his deputies in the State Department; it was that area of the world which was our primary responsibility in the NSC. I think that was a healthy relationship—not one of disrespect—, although it did cause some irritations at times.

One of President Kennedy's major initiatives was an exploration to see whether a better relationship with Egypt might not be developed. At the time, Nasser, the President of Egypt, was one of the “big five” in the non-aligned world along with Tito, Nehru, Nkrumah, and Suharto. These were the “giants” of the non-aligned world. It was the hope of the Kennedy team that enough time had passed since the US decision on the Aswan Dam that it might be possible to establish closer contacts with the Egyptians. Komer, along with Phillips Talbot, then Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs, devoted considerable time to this possible diplomatic initiative. Jack Kennedy became personally involved and so decisions on economic assistance and PL 480 began to be viewed as possible avenues toward this goal. Involved even became the issue of the financing required to save the Abu Simbel temple which attracted Jackie Kennedy's interests. Once she even sent a hand-written note to Nasser on the subject. So there was

a general effort on the part of the Kennedy administration to re-orient our Middle East policy towards establishing better relationships with Nasser.

Of course, this new orientation had to be managed carefully lest the Israelis might come to believe that such an opening was inimical to their security interests. That would have raised a number of domestic political problems that the administration wanted to avoid. In any case, the goal spurred a lot of thinking in the administration accompanied by a number of inter-agency meetings. As I mentioned, it also influenced assistance decisions. We, at the NSC, tried to help the President in meeting his new goal and tried to insure that the bureaucracy responded appropriately to the new initiative.For Iran, we tried through economic development to assist the Shah to broaden his political base. In the subcontinent, we tried to maintain peace between India and Pakistan. China was seen as a major threat in those days, inimicable to U.S. interests.

The NSC role, in the early 1960s, was to work on a daily basis on new foreign policy initiatives, both in strategic terms and on specific issues. As best I can remember, the bureaucracy responded very well to the views and goals of the new administration. NEA was viewed as a good organization, led by an excellent Assistant Secretary who had close working relationships with Bob Komer. They worked well together with understanding and mutual support of efforts by each. I think that good working relationship was probably true for other parts of the State Department and other agencies. Just to generalize a little about my thirteen years in the NSC, I believe that the State Department officials who did the best job were those that had inter-action with the President. The good officers, already well grounded in foreign relations, were most useful when they were able to view a policy or an issue from a Presidential perspective. Those officers were the most effective. NEA usually was able to meet that standard and therefore I always found it a very helpful and useful part of the bureaucracy. There were other parts of the Department that on occasion could not rise to that standard and then their efforts were less than helpful.

Q: In his recent book "The Arabists", Robert Kaplan charges that Hare, Battle and Hart—the NEA Assistant Secretaries who served during the 65-68 period—were the last of the State Department "Arabists" or essentially pro-Arab because they viewed Arab states as being more important to US interests than Israel. Did you share that analysis?

SAUNDERS: I do not. I believe that the Kaplan argument is a specious one. I mentioned earlier that one of the Arab leaders, Nasser, was one of the leaders of the non-aligned movement. It did not make any sense either in a global context or a narrower Middle East context to continually contest Nasser. These NEA assistant secretaries fully understood that the US had a continuing and unswerving commitment to the security of Israel. None of them ever argued otherwise. The difficult part of their task was to insure that US interests in the Middle East, which required the support of some Arab countries, were also protected. They had to develop and sell policies which would serve all of our interests in the area. They had to walk a tight rope between the two conflicting camps. They recognized that one camp or the other would always be trying to entice us in its corner and they knew that a balance had to be struck always. It may well have been that some of the assistant secretaries that you mentioned had had greater experience in the Arab world. Pete Hart, for example, was truly an Arabist. That had been his career. He spoke the language and had served in several Arab countries, having been our Ambassador to Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait and Turkey before becoming Assistant Secretary. Luke Battle, on the other hand, had only one Ambassadorial appointment and that was to Egypt. He had been an Assistant Secretary for Cultural Affairs and later the Executive Secretary, but he was certainly not an arab expert like Hart. So I don't believe that the charge is a fair one. In any case, at least until 1967, one of the over-riding considerations in the development of Middle East policies was the Soviet presence in the area. That was a major concern. The Kennedy thrust toward better relationships with Nasser can not adequately understood unless one views it in a Cold War context. Not only were we concerned with Soviet penetration of the Middle East, but we understood that our relationship with the non-aligned movement affected our global position. Our efforts to

improve relationships with Egypt could in no way to be construed as anti-Israeli, but were more than anything else part of our Cold War strategy. You also have to remember that during the 1960s, starting with the Kennedy administration, we were continually increasing the level of sophistication of the weapon systems we were transferring to Israel. Johnson continued the policy fully and accelerated that development after the 1967 war. So I would conclude that none of the people you mention could be charged with a pro-Arab bias.

Frankly speaking, the Israeli lobby in the United States has created a number of American anti-Semites. The people you mentioned were on the Israeli “character assassination” list. If you look in the editions of the “Near East Report” over years, you can see how certain people who were significantly involved in Middle East policy development were treated. Many of them were subjected to character assassination. It is to these officials' credit that they made pro-US policy and did not succumb to lobbying pressures. In the days when the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee was run by a humane person like Isaiah (Sy) Kenan, the Department's NEA assistant secretaries and their deputies had very good relationships with the Israeli lobby. Then the dialogue was civil and serious. I don't think that Isaiah (Sy) Kenan would ever have maligned the State officials as some of the other Israeli publicists did later.

Q: In the 1961-67 period, were you subjected to any pressure from any domestic lobbying organizations?

SAUNDERS: I was not because I was not at a sufficiently high level. But working in the White House you couldn't avoid being aware of the political pressures on the President. And certainly Bob Komer was subjected to pressure. Komer was a senior and visible official who was viewed as instrumental to US policies in the Middle East. I would speculate that Komer might well have been characterized as an “Arabist” because he was not an Israeli. There were two White House officials who were deeply involved in Middle East policy. One was Komer and the other was a member of the President's council. He was a lawyer and the White House point of contact with the Jewish community.

Often Kennedy would stage a small debate between the lawyer and Komer; that was the Presidential style. Kennedy liked to have different points of view argued in his presence; that was his way of learning and thinking through a problem. So Komer would sometimes be in the position of arguing for a regional policy to offset the position of the American Jewish community as conveyed by the other staff member. This debate format should not be interpreted as Komer being mindlessly on one side; the Kennedy technique just forced all points of view on the table and people took one side or another on a specific issue just to expose the President to all sides of a question. Because of circumstances, it would have been easy to type-cast Komer as pro-arab; that would be unfair and would show a misunderstanding of the circumstances in which these debates took place.

Q: Did you have an opportunity to observe Kennedy at close quarters?

SAUNDERS: I did not have a chance to watch Kennedy up close. I was too junior for that. Komer was often in the Oval Office, almost daily. So I got a second hand sense of the President, but did not have the opportunity to sit in on any meetings with him. Komer was the senior NSC official on the Middle East. Given the Kennedy style, even though he was junior to Bundy and his deputy, Komer essentially reported directly to the President. That was generally true for all the area specialists on the NSC. It was not unusual for Komer to write the President saying that Bundy had asked him to sent a particular memorandum. Kennedy was a very much “hands on” President in foreign policy. So the informal nature of the White House staff was really the result of the President's operating style. The NSC staff was small enough—probably never exceeded fifteen professionals during the Kennedy administration—that a fluid operating process could work well. There was a lot of interchange among the NSC staff partly because many of the issues cut across areas of responsibility. As I mentioned, Komer worked on an inter-agency military assistance review early in the Kennedy administration. Other NSC staffers were obviously interested in the subject because there were military assistance programs in many geographical areas. Indonesia was a big issue at the time. Korea was a major recipient. So the issue was of interest to a number of NSC staffers. But we worked on a

inter-disciplinary and inter-regional basis with considerable collegiality. I must admit that it took the State Department a while to become accustomed to the informality of the process. But the relationships, particularly the one I observed the most—Komer and Talbot—were excellent. People in NEA, like Rodger Davies, came to accept the process. So the process on a personal basis worked quite well. The government institutions had some reservations. In the weeks following the Kennedy assassination and Johnson's assumption of power, word was sent down to the regional bureaus from the State Department's leadership that any calls from the White House were to be returned not from the officer who had received the call, but from an office director or higher. That new approach effected me particularly because I had been accustomed to working with a desk officer on an issue that may have been raised by a memorandum that had come from the Department. I would, if necessary, try to get clarification of a point by calling the drafting officer. But after Kennedy' assassination, I could no longer talk to the desk officer, but would have to deal with the office director or more senior officials. I recall that Komer asked in an NSC staff meeting whether other staff members were having the same experience. They all were. It was during this transition period that one national magazine—"Time" or "Newsweek"—quoted some one in the Department referring to us as "White House meddlers". I would summarize the Kennedy period as one that shook the bureaucracy. Individuals made the informal relationships work quite well. But when Johnson became President, the institutions took advantage of the change and re-established a more formal process.

The 1961-63 period was a period of learning as the participants in the policy development process learned how to work on an informal basis. That was followed by a retrenchment soon after Johnson became President and the return to a more normal process. This is not to say that personal relationships were not important even after 1963. Luke Battle, who became Assistant Secretary for NEA in April 1967, is always very generous when he discussed our relationships which were particularly close after I became a senior NSC staff member in June 1967. But after 1963, the system became much more formal and it finally lost much of its personal touch during the Kissinger-Rogers feud when each instructed

his own staff not to talk to the staff of the other. By that time, my point of contact in the Department was Joe Sisco; we tended to ignore our bosses' feud and I think we were therefore able to make significant contributions to the foreign policy arena.

The different Kennedy and Johnson styles made a difference to policy determination. But I hasten to add that there is no right or wrong way to organize the NSC system or staff. There is only the President's way. For example, the informality of the Kennedy period reflected the Presidential thought process. The NSC staff's role was and is to assist the President to reach a decision. How that role is played must be completely compatible with the Presidential thought process. Johnson was more comfortable with structure; that required a more organized NSC process. Both Kennedy—after the “Bay of Pigs” debacle—and Johnson were well served by their systems even though they were quite different. In my twenty years experience—1961-81—, I would pick 1969 as the year when the NSC system provided a President the most broad gauged analysis of all reasonable options in a highly systematic and intellectual way. That was the first year of the Nixon-Kissinger period. Kissinger pressed for intellectual rigor.

I don't think we should overstate the formality of the process in the Johnson period. It was more formal and structured than in the Kennedy period. But, for example, during the Johnson years, I worked in the NSC during two back-to-back Indian famines. The Indians requested that we send them 10 million tons of PL 480 grain. This was in the 1965-67 period when inflationary pressures were just beginning to loom on the US horizon, partly as a consequence of the Vietnam war. Furthermore, at the time, Congress was in one of its anti-foreign assistance periods. Johnson's decision on the Indian request was a perfect illustration of how the NSC staff managed a dialogue between the President and the government professionals. Among that latter group were the Indian experts, the “green revolution” experts in the Department of Agriculture and the economic experts in the Council of Economic Advisers who had to speculate the price consequences of taking 10 million tons of grain out of stockpile. The NSC system permitted all of these different elements to contribute to the dialogue. It was not, as it would have been under Kissinger,

one massive study with the participation of all of the relevant agencies which would end with some options and recommendations. With Johnson, it was more informal; if the President had a question, the NSC staff would get him an answer. When another question was raised, we would try to get an answer to that. So all the facets were dealt with, but not in a very systematic or structured way. We dealt with Johnson's questions and doubts one by one; it was his instincts that raised the questions and it was those questions that kept a dialogue going until he was satisfied that he would be comfortable with the decision that he reached. Of course, there were memoranda, meetings, etc., but it was not a very systematic approach from the beginning. Not all of the ramifications of the issue were viewed at once; the process had a much more ad hoc flavor. The Kennedy period was marked by extreme fluidity, when the staff would dip down into the bureaucracy to collect perspectives which we would then be reflected in our memoranda to the President. The Johnson administration was more bureaucratic, but not totally systematized.

Q: In the 1961-69 period, the US was involved in a number of crisis. Did you, as a member of the NSC staff, go from one crises to another or was there time in between for reflections?

SAUNDERS: In my twenty-five years in government, I have learned that one reflects as one is involved in particular issues. You think about them while you are showering or while driving home or at other times of the non-work day. It is not done by setting time aside during the work day. You in fact do it away from work and during work while writing memoranda or making phone calls. I should note that the 1961-67 period, although seeing a number of crisis, was not a period when we lurched from one to another. For example, we had large assistance programs in South Asia that were designed to meet long range needs. There was an annual budget cycle when such programs were reviewed; there were period during the year when specific assistance issues had to be resolved, but much of the work proceeded routinely. It was after 1967 that crises became more frequent, as it least in the area for which I had responsibility. It was only during the 1967 war and thereafter that I

worked around the clock. Until then, I spent 10-12 hours in the office, but the 1967 war and the subsequent periods required much greater effort.

Q: Let me now turn to Iran during the 1961-67 period. Why was it important to the US and what was our policy toward it?

SAUNDERS: Iran was central to our concerns because the Persian Gulf was central to our economic well-being. Iran, in addition of being a major oil producer, was also a buffer between the Soviet Union and the Gulf oil fields. As our relationships with Iran became closer, we used its territory for listening posts to monitor Soviet nuclear and missile programs. Both Iran and the US were members of the Central Treaty Organization in a period when CENTO was an important tool of our foreign policy. Pakistan was also viewed as an important country because of its proximity to the Soviet Union. Even in 1961 and the following period, we understood that the Shah was not in total control of his country; we knew that he had powerful enemies and we were therefore concerned about the stability of the monarchy and what might follow after the Shah's departure. As the Shah's control of his country grew, he became increasingly important to us. In the 1960s, we were not as greatly concerned with the Shah's behavior as were later in the 1970s. In the 1960s we were preoccupied with the Soviet specter and with the need to bring some stability to the country. We had always hoped that ultimately the Shah would broaden his political base, but in the 1960s, we were worried whether he could stay in power.

During the Kennedy administration, the agencies were required to draft country papers. It was one of these papers that provided me the opportunity to make my first trip overseas after joining the NSC. I went to Algeria with the Department of State's desk officer and a member of the Policy Planning staff. Since Algeria had only recently become independent, we went as a team to draft a policy paper for that country. I traveled again in early 1967 for orientation purposes in preparation for becoming the senior NSC staffer on the region. It was just coincidental that a war broke out in the Middle East later that year, but I found it

useful to have seen the area on the ground. After 1967, I traveled much more frequently as I am sure we will discuss later.

Q: When you became a senior staff member of the NSC in June, 1967, Walt Rostow had succeeded Bundy as the National Security Advisor. What were your responsibilities?

SAUNDERS: By this time, people were assigned to specific geographical areas. The staffs' responsibilities were a mirror image of the State Department's organization. I handled all NEA matters, including area and country policies as well as programs such as military and economic assistance. My principal point of contact in the State Department was Luke Battle, the Assistant Secretary for NEA. In the Pentagon, I had contacts in ISA (International Security Affairs), known as the “little State Department in the Pentagon”. There I most often had a dialogue with the official who handled regional matters. In CIA, I dealt with most often with the people in the analysis divisions. I got to know the Director of Current Intelligence and the his staff and the people in the Office of National Estimates who were working on Middle East issues. Sometimes, I would contact with the relevant official working on clandestine operations. In AID, my point of contact was the Assistant Administrator for NEA or his deputy.

I thought that we worked quite well as a team. During and in the immediate aftermath of the 1967 war, organizational lines became diffused because President Johnson asked Mac Bundy to leave the Presidency of the Ford Foundation for a period to establish and head an executive committee of the NSC. I think that was only the second time that such an arrangement had developed—the first time being the EXCOM set up during the Cuban Missile Crises. Johnson took this route because the ramifications of the Middle East war were so broad covering both domestic and international concerns. For example, there was the threat to our oil imports and the potential impact of on our domestic economy. That required the participation of the Treasury Department and other domestically oriented agencies. So the 1967 war raised a lot of important issues that cut across agency lines. But the EXCOM included all relevant cabinet secretaries and when meetings were held, it

was the principals who attended. I worked for Bundy during this period; I took the notes at the EXCOM meetings.

Q: Prior to the outbreak of actual hostilities in 1967, did were there any warning signs?

SAUNDERS: There were lots of warning signs. I saw some of them during my visit to the area in early 1967. There had been an aerial engagement between Israeli and Syrian planes. I saw a Syrian plane that had crashed at the northern end of Lake Tiberias. From February on, there were signs of increasing tensions. Matters came to a head when Nasser expelled the UN Force with U Thant's acquiescence. There were several points during this sequence of events where the war could have been prevented. So it was not like the 1973 war when we had very few intelligence indicators that suggested the outbreak of hostilities. In 1967, tensions were clearly rising over a period of months. We did not establish any special process to observe the area, but we did have more frequent inter-agency contacts and more careful intelligence analysis. The crises started really in early May; by mid-May the UN Forces had been expelled and Nasser had closed the Strait of Tiran. That last action was of particular importance to us because in the aftermath of the Suez crisis, Eisenhower had insisted that the Israelis withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula. In exchange, he had made certain commitments about the Strait of Tiran, which were the entrance to the Gulf of Elat or Aqaba, depending on whom you are talking to. It was the channel for Israeli import of Iranian oil. In essence, Eisenhower had promised to keep the Strait open. So after its closing, intense diplomatic efforts made to reverse Nasser's action and to head off the war, but they were not successful. Johnson was personally involved in the crisis, as has been well documented in a number of writings about this period. About ten days before the outbreak of hostilities—after Nasser had closed the Straits, Abba Eban, then the Foreign Minister of Israel, came to Washington to find out what the United States intended to do about Nasser. Johnson chaired an NSC meeting, which included some officials who were not usually present at NSC meetings. For example, Luke Battle and Joe Sisco, then the Assistant Secretary for International Organizations in the State Department, were there. Joe Sisco was asked to present the Israeli perspective.

Luke Battle presented the Arab perspective. In attendance, there were non-governmental people there such as Abe Fortas, Clark Clifford and others. Rusk had just been talking to various Congressmen and Senators. The whole meeting was a perfect illustration of the Johnson style. It was perfectly staged; the presentations were clear and logical; all the facts, including the intelligence analysis were on the table. He had to decide what he would say to Eban that evening. At the end of the meeting, Johnson said in his Texan fashion: “Come sundown, I am the one who has to bell this cat. What should I tell Eban?”. Everyone around the table had an opportunity to make his suggestion. Johnson did not do what Nixon would have done. He did not write down the pluses and minuses on a yellow pad; he collected human judgments. He heard from all the participants how they reacted to the presentations. He of course knew how the Fortas and Clifford minds worked; he knew Rusk and McNamara well. He took in all of these views and perceptions and by the end of the day, reached his own conclusions.

Johnson was intimately involved in Middle East affairs. The day Nasser announced the closing of the Strait of Tiran, the American Jewish community began a “grass-roots” campaign that produced 100-200,000 telegrams to the President. Johnson was certainly aware of the domestic implications of his Middle East policy; the telegram deluge just punctuated that fact. All telegrams ended in my office; Johnson insisted that each be answered in some fashion. We drafted some possible responses and then turned the task of actually replying over to the White House's correspondence division. It was a horrendous work load.

I don't recall when precisely I began to have regular contacts with the American Jewish community. I did begin to have regular contacts with the Israeli Embassy starting in the mid-1960s, as well with the Embassies from Arab countries. Bob Komer had maintained those contacts assiduously when he was the senior NSC staff member. His contacts were usually at the Ambassadorial level. So the Embassies DCMs or Political Counselors began

to touch base with me. The Department was quite aware of these contacts because we recorded them in “Memoranda of Conversations”, copies of which were sent to NEA.

There is, of course, some risk involved when different parts of the government talk to an Embassy. To assure a consistent and coherent US presentation, it requires self-discipline on the part of the US government officials. It is not likely that we will ever see the day when there is only one US official maintaining contact with a foreign Embassy; even in the Department of State, officials at various levels maintain contact with an Embassy. This open approach to dialogues requires that all who participate do so responsibly being quite careful with their words about US policy so that no confusion arises and that the foreign embassy is not misled. I don't recall this approach ever giving rise to any communication problems; we were all quite aware of what each of us was saying. I always regarded my role as an explainer of US policy, not as a policy pronouncer. The foreign ambassador was well informed about US policy; he had gotten it from the Secretary of State or an assistant secretary or in a written document. I tried to explain how and why certain decision and conclusions were reached. I think it was useful to explain to foreign representatives the role of Congress and individual members and the views and perspective of the President. We were trying to be helpful by explaining to foreign observers the totality of the US policy making process, so that specific positions could be better understood.

Q: What do you remember about that period in June, 1967? Were you in the office twenty-four hour each day?

SAUNDERS: Probably not all night, but we certainly had some long working days. There were numerous “hot line” exchanges with the Soviets and multi-national efforts in the UN. When it came to specific issues, like the attack on our electronic ship The Liberty, there were intense exchanges with the Israelis. The first White House reaction was a very interesting one; it came from the President himself. He instructed the staff to call the Soviets on the “hot line” to inform them that we were deploying a couple of extra ships to the area in response to the attack and for rescue purposes. So President's first concern

was the Soviet reaction; he wanted to make sure that our ship movements would not be misread. I don't recall much reaction to the attack itself; it was simply unexplainable that Israel would attack an American ship. It was a tragic event; our first reaction as I remember was to deem it as an awful mistake. We were puzzled by the question of how a sophisticated military force such as Israel possessed could make such a mistake. We were upset by the tragedy, but considered a consequence of an error, not a deliberate act. The conspiratorial theories surfaced later; to the best of my recollection, they were not our first reaction. Of course, the fact the Israeli apologized quickly limited the damage; it would have had serious consequences had the apologies and the compensations been greatly delayed.

The EXCOM (Executive Committee) met daily to monitor ramifications of the war for the US. It was a very busy period. I think that Johnson may have been somewhat concerned about the capacity of the NSC system, as it existed in the pre-war days, to respond to a crisis. I think that is why he required the an EXCOM be established and called Mac Bundy back to head it up. Of course, during this period, Johnson was preoccupied with the Vietnam war. He couldn't afford to have another major US involvement in an another part of the world and certainly not in the Middle East. That accounts for much of the rationale behind diplomatic efforts to avert the conflict. He was greatly concerned that the CIA-DoD estimates that Israel could be successful in a war might be over-optimistic. If the estimates had been wrong, it would have presented him with a major dilemma. When the war broke out, he wanted to make absolutely sure that the US government focussed on the Middle East with all the resources required. He probably felt uneasy with the pre-war NSC system; he probably was not sure that it would have provided him the focus that he felt was necessary. In the pre-war days, we used to refer to the State Department's operating style as the “floating crap game”. There were a few people around Gene Rostow, then the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, who made operational judgements somewhat by the seat of their pants. There was a lack of a systematic approach in the Department to the problems that were arising in early 1967. For example, foreign ambassadors would be

called in and told some things which may not have been sufficiently analyzed. We in the NSC had some difficulties getting a handle on what and how things were being done in the Department. The President could not have been comfortable with the pre-war process.

The EXCOM provided a tool that permitted us to give the aftermath of the war the kind of systematic and careful attention the situation deserved. So it continued for a couple of months although obviously with decreasing intensity. During this period, the General Assembly held a special session, Johnson met with Kosygin at Glassboro State and Congress was seriously engaged in Middle East affairs. So there was a lot of diplomacy at work, especially in relations to the super-powers, in a effort to bring the Middle East issues back into a diplomatic framework. That was not really completed until November 1967 when the Security Council passed Resolution 242. Arthur Goldberg, our Ambassador in the UN and Joe Sisco, still the Assistant Secretary for IO, were very much involved in all of these diplomatic efforts. We were all trying to put the issues back on negotiating tables so that they might be brought to a settlement.

At the end of the Johnson administration, the NSC staff was asked to pull together all available documents which related to various crisis that had arisen during the Johnson era. These documents became the foundations for Johnson's book Vantage Point.
I had four crisis to worry about, but I became most fascinated by the 1967 war. I put together four large loose leafed binders of documents which I had pulled out of our files. The Department of State sent over boxes and boxes of their telegrams and other communications. I am now talking about the late fall of 1968 and early winter of 1969, almost 18 months after the war. Even with that passage of time, I found it most interesting to try to reconstruct the US efforts in the mid-1967 period. I had access to Johnson's telephone logs and all the White House's material. I tried to put this material together in a sensible way so that the history of the period could be seen as a coherent total. When I had finished with my document research and had put the books together, I wrote a covering memorandum to the Historian in which I suggested that the documentary record might not reveal the complete picture. For example, I cited a decision that was never

made. The issue was that “Israeli troops would stay in the occupied territories until the Arab-Israeli conflict was settled once and for all”. A decision on that matter was never made. I pointed out places in the books where there was some rhetoric about the issue, primarily stemming from officials in the Israeli Embassy. The first White House press release on the morning of June 7, 1967 used that language, but no one had ever or did subsequently ever analyzed the import of those words. During one of the EXCOM meetings during the conflict, I think it was Bob McNamara who raised the question about the meaning of that phrase. Nobody, of course, in June 1967 expected that it would take until 1993-94 to reach agreement on Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. That was 26 years later. But the point is that the rhetoric was never based on an articulated decision; it was not until later that the consequences of that void was realized. It was this non-decision that in part stimulated Sadat to go to war in 1973. My point is that the rhetoric became US policy and indeed was included in Resolution 242 when it referred to an exchange of “land for peace”—i.e. Israeli withdrawal in exchange for Arab recognition of Israel and the establishment of some kind of normal relationship between the warring parties.

Today, and this view may be somewhat different than what I might have articulated in that memorandum I mentioned earlier, I think that famous phrase might have come out of the very close dialogue conducted by Walt Rostow and Evron, the Israeli DCM. They were in close contact and Evron had been assigned by the Israeli Ambassador to maintain the Rostow connection. Out of those conversations came an Israeli position—not surprising from the Israeli point of view—that the Israelis had pulled out of the Sinai in 1956 because the American President had insisted on it. That withdrawal, as I mentioned before, was accompanied by certain American commitments that had not been kept—e.g. failure to keep the Strait of Tiran open. In 1967, the Israelis were not inclined to rely upon US promises, but insisted on immediate and visible quid pro quo. That position, so logical from their point of view, easily translated into simple and effective political rhetoric that an American President could use. He could easily say that there had been another crisis in

the Middle East, but this time the solution for a final settlement was easily articulated. The proposition had the great benefit of sounding sensible and simple. No one really asked what the words might really mean or entail. At one time, I remember Rostow asking me to find out how long it took in 1957 to complete Israeli troop withdrawal from the Sinai. In fact, in 1957, the crisis was in October and the Israelis withdrew approximately eight months later. So after the 1967 war, we assumed that the “once and for all” settlement would take about as long as the Israeli withdrawal had taken in 1957 or perhaps a few months more. Certainly no one contemplated 26 years! My only real recollection of anyone raising a question about the phrase was when Bob McNamara said at an EXCOM meeting that he thought we might be in some difficulties because there was no plan to get the Israelis out of the occupied territories—the Sinai, the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights. I think he raised the question a week or two after the end of the war, after the pressures of the immediate crisis had dissipated and people had little more time to reflect. As far as I can remember, no one picked up McNamara's question to give it any thought. In any case, by then the phrase had already been used and it became part of our position in the UN where it became enshrined in Resolution 242. Some people would logically say that if the US had put on a full diplomatic “court pressure” we might have progressed further down the road to peace. Even some Israelis support that contention, although we all know why it did not happen. Everybody was exhausted. It is inconceivable that in light of the psychological and physical condition of all the combatants and potential mediators, we could have even considered a Kissinger-like “shuttle diplomacy” or anything like it that would have required a high level commitment on the part of everybody. So major diplomatic efforts might have been appropriate in the aftermath of the 1967 war, but that was just not in the cards given the situation.

The purpose of the diplomatic activity after the war was to try to establish some mediating structures that might bring about the “land for peace” exchange. Johnson did not want the United States to be the mediator primarily because he had to focus on Southeast Asia. Resolution 242 put the mediating onus on the UN. The Secretary General appointed a

special emissary who tried to achieve agreement from both sides on some settlement principles. My role in the NSC, during these days, was to work closely with Joe Sisco, Luke Battle and Arthur Goldberg who was our principal representative at the UN. It was the UN delegation and the Department of State who had the responsibilities for the day-to-day implementation of Presidential decisions. It was our role to bring the President's perspectives, commitments and judgements to the process. We kept in close contact with the operating officials because the President was eager to know what was going on and to become involved from time to time whenever necessary. So the UN effort was our principal focus for the balance of 1967.

Q: You have mentioned a number of prisms through which the policy makers viewed the Middle East. You mentioned the Cold War, the oil supply, Vietnam, American domestic politics. Were there any other factors external to the region which were part of the global framework within which policy options were considered?

SAUNDERS: There is one more I should mention, which is related to some of those you listed like domestic politics and Southeast Asia. We see the same phenomenon, perhaps even accentuated, today. I refer to the first signs, becoming evident even in the mid-1960s, that the United States, by itself, could not police the world. I believe that phrase actually came out of the Vietnam experience. Take for example my earlier story about Johnson and the NSC on the day that the President was to see Eban. As I mentioned, Rusk came to that meeting having just been on the Hill with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He said that that group of Senators certainly supported protecting Israel, but they could not see the U.S. doing it by itself. One of the papers that the NSC had before it came from Rusk; it included two options, one of which was that the United States unilaterally maintain free and open navigation through the Strait of Tiran by using its naval forces. The other option was to try to assemble what became known as the “Flotilla” which would have been an international naval force consisting of ships from various countries, primarily European. As I recall it, the memorandum in fact dismissed the first option in a brief sentence or two by saying it was not politically acceptable. That curt elimination of the

unilateral action option was reinforced by Rusk's report on his meeting with the Foreign Relations Committee. So there was another limitation on our Middle East action options. It was the sense that the US could not police the world by itself any longer; it was not politically acceptable in the United States in light of our Vietnam experience and resource limitations. So in the phrase “domestic politics” I would include not only the Israeli support pressures, but this embryonic sensitivity to unilateral actions. It is interesting that this view, which is so prevalent today, would be developed in a Middle East crisis when one might have expected a group of Senators to support the defense of Israel at any cost. It could have been expected had the crisis been elsewhere in the world, but the Rusk message was clearly that the politicians were concerned about unilateralism even when it came to a crisis involving Israel.

I mentioned earlier that all parties in the 1967 crisis were exhausted after the end of the war. I should hasten to add, however, that I have never believed that physical exhaustion is an impediment to good policy making. I have been involved in many exhausting processes and I have never felt that the physical drain on the participants really made a difference to policy development. In the case of the 1967 crisis, I did not intend the word “exhaustion” to be applied to be individuals, but rather to the national policy making structures. People had been through a crisis; if then they had been confronted with the necessity of mounting a major organized diplomatic peace making process, such as a Kissinger shuttle-like effort, requiring the continual involvement of a President already preoccupied with Vietnam and facing a potential re-election campaign, I can not believe that it would have been feasible. It would have required a far greater dedication, energy, discipline, precision than could have been expected; the American political leadership just could not have mounted such an effort at that time. It wasn't that their thought processes might have been blurred by exhaustion; that is not the case usually. The problem was finding the verve and time to create a new initiative at a time when a horrendous situation had just come to a conclusion and other problems were requiring maximum attention. The inclination was to take stock and catch a breath.

Leaping a little ahead, I remember that in 1974, during one of Kissinger's shuttles—after 26 trips into Damascus—, I was asking myself how much longer could I, physically, stand the pace. I never came to a conclusion because that shuttle ended soon thereafter and we went home for a breather. I do not believe that despite being on the road for 35 straight days, our production suffered. It took a lot of effort to negotiate and draft an agreement that contending parties would sign. We did that even though it took us 35 straight days. We had to be just as acute at the end of the period when worrying about the last negotiating issues as we were when we began the process. I don't think the physical fatigue made a difference. Of course, I am only speaking for myself; others may differ. I don't think the intense process made a difference to our ability to cope with issues even week after week of work. We were tired, but I don't believe that that reduced our effectiveness.

Q: Let me now move to 1968 and ask you to describe to us what the structure of the NSC was in that year?

SAUNDERS: First of all, a little background. When Lyndon Johnson became President and became more familiar with foreign policy issues and the process, he made a significant change in the organization of the NSC system. I think I alluded to that before when I compared the Kennedy and Johnson's operating styles. Johnson established a second tier review process under the leadership of the Under Secretary of State—the Number Two man in the Department. Prior to that, that review level had been under the aegis of the National Security Advisor. So we had three review levels: the lowest at the assistant secretary level which canvassed all reasonable options; that review was forwarded to the group headed by the Under Secretary of State—where political realities and broader administration perspectives were injected. That review level then forwarded its options and recommendations to the group of principals led by the President. By placing the intermediary level under the Under Secretary of State, Lyndon Johnson was saying to the Secretaries of State and Defense that he wanted them—and their

deputies—to put themselves in a President's shoes and then reach some resolutions of any disputes that they and their bureaucracies might have. When a coordinated policy recommendation was reached, then the principals could come to the President to explain how why they reached it and what other options they might have considered. In other words, he expected Rusk and McNamara to spend sometime worrying how he, Johnson, might do his job better and how he might develop policies which would be in the best interest of the nation. By forcing that consideration down to the departmental level, he tried to avoid the a process which permitted two bureaucracy to come to the White House, each with its own agenda, strategy and goals, leaving the resolution of their differences to the White House. So by 1968, the assistant secretaries would forward to Nick Katzenbach, then the Under Secretary, a paper discussing a particular issue with their range of options which included the views of all relevant agencies. From Katzenbach then would come a memorandum to the President, which would have reflected a coordinated view with a single preferred solution. The NSC staff participated in the process being represented at all three review levels. The Johnson period is the only time when policy development took that form.

I should note that toward the end of his term, Johnson was really irritated with the bureaucracy because he was still, in his mind, not receiving coordinated and agreed upon positions. The papers may have indicated agreement, but when the issues were discussed with him, there were still too many deep divisions between State and Defense particularly. The theory of this new NSC process was not converted into practice. But I think we have to remember that we were then still deeply immersed in Vietnam situation with no good resolution apparently in sight, although most if not all of other major foreign policy course had been pretty well established by 1968. So the State-Defense disputes tended to focus on Vietnam, for which I personally had no responsibility. The South Asia policy had been hammered out in 1965-66; for the Middle East, after the 1967 war and the establishment of the EXCOM, the policy development process was somewhat divorced from the normal NSC process; by 1968, it was a day-to-day diplomatic exercise which

didn't require any new policy determinations, strategy and direction; therefore it didn't really require Presidential involvement. One effect of this process was that the NSC was able to stay relatively small, although it had grown since the Kennedy-Mac Bundy days. I would guess that from 1961 to 1968, the NSC may have grown from 10-12 who were there when I joined the staff to perhaps as many as two dozens or less. After the end of the Johnson period, it grew considerably as the process changed.

When the Nixon administration came in early 1969, Kissinger, the new NSC Advisor kept only two or three of the Johnson NSC staff—I was one of those kept on. So essentially, there was a complete turnover of the staff. I think that I was kept on because both Nixon and Kissinger came to office thinking that the Middle East was a potential powder keg—I think those were Nixon's precise words. I know when I was interviewed by Kissinger in November 1968 that he was concerned by that possibility. I had vaguely known Kissinger because he had been used as a consultant by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. He had an office across the hall from mine which he would use when he was in town, but I can't say that I really knew him. But in light of their concerns about the Middle East, I believe that both Nixon and Kissinger were interested in having some continuity of staff in an area about which they didn't really know very much. Also, I think I was helped by some positive comments that were made to Kissinger about my work and my non-political views by some people in whom he had confidence. He told me, as he did the others he kept on, that he wanted us to stay for “a while”. For me, that “while” became eight years. It was “quite a while”!

In any case, the first point to be made was that there was a major change of staff when the Nixon administration came in. The corollary was that Kissinger assembled probably one of the best NSC staffs ever. Particularly striking was the number of senior bureaucrats who left their departments to join the NSC; that gave the NSC the great advantage of knowing the process and the people in the departments and agencies. There were a couple of exceptions—that is people employed from outside of government—but not many. If Carter's or Clinton's NSC staffs are compared with Nixon's, it is readily apparent why those

had and have difficulty in functioning well. It must be noted that even those departmental officials that Kissinger recruited had to pause and reflect on their new vantage point; they had to figure out how the President's mind worked. I'll use Pete Vaky as an illustration. He was a highly respected. He had been the acting Assistant Secretary for American Republics in January 1969. Kissinger asked him to join the NSC staff as the senior Latin American expert. So Pete spent the morning in the State Department and the afternoon in his NSC office. We were office neighbors, so that I would see him often. Once he told me that he just had had an interesting experience. He had been in the Department a couple of days previously and had approved a memorandum which was to be sent to the White House. He then mentioned that he had just received it in his NSC office. He said that in looking at it in his afternoon office, he noticed that it didn't really address the problem from a Presidential perspective. There really is a difference in how an issue is viewed from a government department and from the White House. Kissinger assembled a very good NSC staff. The officials who came from various agencies quickly learned to view issues from a Presidential point of view.

The second point to be made is that Nixon had very clear ideas on how the NSC system had to be reorganized. It focused on the fundamental question of the three tier review levels which had remained unchallenged since the Kennedy days. The essential logic of that system was just accepted by Johnson and continued. The first level, as I have said before, examined the issue and the options. The mid-level added domestic political considerations and the impact of various options on the President's personal and larger political relationship with other world leaders. The third level, chaired by the President, was the decision making point. The only change in that process since the Kennedy days was the question of who would chair the mid-level review process. Johnson had pushed it down to the State Department, but by the end of his term had come to the conclusion that for one reason or another that was probably not the right solution. Nixon on the other hand had the view that if he received only one single recommendation from the Secretaries of State and Defense, after they and their staffs had resolved their differences, then the

President would not really have a choice. He felt that the energy of the whole bureaucracy will have gone into fashioning one single recommendation to the detriment of serious considerations of alternatives. That was just not acceptable. President Nixon wanted more choices. So he took the chairmanship of the mid-level review away from the Department of State and put it in the hands of his National Security Advisor.

A review of policy documents in the first year of the Nixon administration will, I believe, clearly show a major effort having been made to provide the President a series of serious and well considered options which were not necessarily mutually exclusive, but reflected more different emphases along a range of policy choices. It was often the role of the NSC staff to reshape the options which had been forwarded by the departments to make the discussions at the mid-level review committee more meaningful and insightful. We added the political dimensions that I mentioned earlier as well as some bureaucratic concerns of which we were aware from having been involved in the formulation of the options at departmental level. The structural change that I have described was intended to force the development of realistic alternatives from which the President could choose. The pros and cons of each option were carefully assessed. It is true that this new approach resulted in prodigious paper work, but that first year stimulated an intellectual rigor in the system that was perhaps unprecedented; it certainly was impressive.

I believe that in fact it was the Middle East that was the pioneer for this new approach to policy development. The first NSC meetings of the new administration were devoted to Middle East issues because the French had proposed at the UN that the Four Powers —Soviet Union, France, Great Britain and the US—convene a meeting to discuss the Arab-Israel conflict. Nixon's first trip as President, which took place within a month of his inauguration, was to Europe. There he was to meet De Gaulle and Nixon knew that the French proposal would be on the agenda for their discussion. If I remember correctly, before the trip, there were two Saturday morning NSC meetings on the new administration's strategy for dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict, the French proposal and

other matters that might arise during his European visit. So the new NSC system was first tested on Middle East issues.

The preparation for these NSC meeting had started even before the inauguration. I remember that period well because I was not told that I would stay with the NSC until late in December or early in January. I was actually in Philadelphia with my family celebrating the Christmas holidays and at that time I didn't know whether I had a job. But around the first of the year, I received a call from Larry Eagleburger who was then with Kissinger at the Pierre Hotel in New York, where the transition team was working. Larry told me to come to New York to meet Kissinger, which I did. But once I was told that I would be kept, I immediately went to work with Mort Halperin, who was to be one of the new NSC staffers, to review all NSC directives as issued by the previous administrations and to categorize them. We looked for directives that had been overtaken by events and those which were still valid, but addressed fundamental issues that needed to be re-considered by the new administration. We basically surveyed all existing policies for all parts of the world, summarized the content of each NSC directive and listed those that needed to be reviewed in depth over a period of time. Ultimately, that work turned into a directive to the departments and agencies requesting that certain policies be reviewed and that appropriate views be forwarded to the White House on a pre-determined schedule.

Kissinger's arrival also signaled a major increase in the NSC staff in part because he added a new function. He established a systems analysis group to perform a function that the NSC had never really done. In the Kennedy-Johnson period, the issue of the defense budget was essentially left to McNamara and the Pentagon. The NSC staff did not get involved in that process. Kissinger felt that had been a mistake and therefore created this new systems analysis staff which focused at first on defense budget issues, but later became involved in other matters such as disarmament issues. This new function increased the NSC staff to about 75 people. This analytical capability was also useful when the Israeli would approach us for additional military assistance which often called for the sale or transfer of higher level equipment, primarily aircraft. The system analysts

were experts at arms comparisons and we would therefore turn to them to provide us some technical analysis of the reasonableness of the Israeli requests in terms of Arab-Israeli arms balance and the possible consequences of acceding to Israeli requests for new weapon systems.

After that first surge of Presidential interest in Middle East issues, driven primarily, as I said, by some French suggestions, Nixon's and Kissinger's interests were turned to other issues. Of course, by early 1969, the outlines of the President's policies had been set because he had selected certain options during the NSC meetings that I referred to earlier. The President and Kissinger were kept fully informed about Middle East developments, but the center of action shifted to the Four Power talks at the UN. So much of the work was a follow-on to UN Resolutions. For the rest of 1969, the Middle East was left essentially to the day-to-day diplomatic work. In the Spring of that year, the administration had started its policy of engagement with the Soviets (later given the formal name of “d#tente”). As part of that general approach, Joe Sisco, then the Assistant Secretary for NEA and Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin held periodic conversations about Middle East issues. The two of them held a series of conversations lasting about three months. Joe went to Moscow toward the end of the summer to continue the bilateral discussions which were taking place outside of the Four Power framework in New York. The hope, of course, was that if the two super-powers could agree, then it would be easier to reach agreement among the Four Powers. Although the US was represented by a State Department official in the US-Soviet talks, Kissinger wanted to be up-dated frequently. There was a difference in perspectives between Kissinger, who was very mindful of the politics involved in the discussions, and Sisco and Dobrynin, who were more interested in the diplomatic formulations and their success.

There has been a thesis that Kissinger intentionally stayed out of Middle East affairs. I would say that was not the full story. It is true, as I mentioned earlier, that Kissinger thought that he didn't have a full grasp of Middle East affairs. That meant that he had to go through an intensive learning period. But he was certainly well informed about

the diplomatic efforts being undertaken; he participated fully in the development of the options presented to the President before his trip to Europe. I was over at Kissinger's house one Sunday preparing him for one of the first NSC meeting. We discussed then various policy options, their pros and cons, etc. So he was very much involved in the intellectual process, but he was still learning in 1969. It is true that during that year, he did not involve himself in the day-to-day conduct of diplomatic activity; he let Sisco and Dobrynin carry on their dialogue and let Rogers develop his views on the Middle East. It is understandable why people thought that Kissinger might not be involved in Middle East issues because his participation was not a public one; within the administration, however, his contribution to policy development was virtually continuous. Sometimes, he worked through me; sometimes he would talk to Sisco directly. He was testing his ideas and making his contribution; it is just not accurate to say that he was not involved in Middle East issues in 1969.

Secretary Rogers gave a speech on the Middle East in December 1969. It was a combination of follow-up to the Sisco-Dobrynin talks as well as Rogers' discussion with Gromyko while the two of them attended the General Assembly meeting in the Fall of 1969. The results of these different dialogues were negligible since we couldn't agree with the Soviets on a couple of key points. For a variety of reasons, Rogers and Sisco decided that it would be a good idea to put the American position on the public record just prior to an Arab summit meeting that was to take place in late 1969 or early 1970. I recognize that there was and may still be a perception that Rogers made that speech for his personal reasons; there is even a view that the White House distanced itself from the positions articulated by the Secretary. But I remember being in the doorway of the Cabinet room when Nixon was informed of Rogers' desire to give a speech on the Middle East. I think most likely the actual draft text was given to the President. Nixon and Kissinger discussed it, so that it seemed clear to me that the White House was aware of Rogers' plans and at least did not object. The White House was not caught unaware by Rogers' speech.

Q: By 1970, was there a divergence on Middle East policy with the White House more concerned by how the Middle East fit into East-West relations and with the State Department perceiving the Middle East more as a "stand alone" matter?

SAUNDERS: That is probably an accurate assessment, but that was true of a lot of issues under discussion then and even later. It was certainly true for the Bangladesh secession that first began in 1971. One of Nixon's and Kissinger's principal efforts was devoted to the restructuring the Soviet-US relationship. They were devoted to substituting negotiations for the threat of the use of force. That led, for example, to the arms control negotiations. The Sisco-Dobrynin talks were intended to demonstrate that through intensive discussions, the two super-powers could reach some understanding of what might be the outlines of Middle East settlement. If we and the Soviets could reach such understanding, then it was expected that we would convince our respective "clients" to agree on that outline. In fact, the discussions really fell apart when the Soviets would not distance themselves from the Egyptian position which was unacceptable to us and Israel. But this approach to the settlement of Middle East issues was just an illustration of a general concept which was based on the assumption that a dialogue about contentious issues would bring the super-powers to a less hostile relationship. Parenthetically, if one wishes to have a full flavor of this Nixon-Kissinger policy, I would recommend that people re-read the annual world reports that were produced under Kissinger's auspices. They were laboriously developed; Kissinger made a major effort to conceptionalize in these reports the policy of the administration in a large context. The chapters on US-Soviet relationships are especially instructive on this policy view. So that was the White House perspective.

Let me talk a little about the preparation of those annual reports. Each staff member was responsible for writing on the area or areas of jurisdiction. In my case, that covered primarily the Arab-Israel relationships and the South Asia issues, which, in one year, in light of the Bangladesh succession, became a major component of the report. We were expected to develop the first draft for our area. We learned quickly that Henry had his

own strategic framework which would establish the parameters for the description of events. That framework became known to us through staff meetings and often through his comments to ambassadors or to the press. So we gleaned from that the beginnings of an overall strategic structure of the annual report. From his comments and other analysis, we would then try to fit our commentaries into that over-arching framework. I don't remember being instructed to mention specific events, but knowing Henry's thinking and becoming acquainted with his operational style, we learned quickly to take the thrust of his thinking and incorporate it into your own thinking; after all, we were his staff and that of the President's and were expected to support and elaborate on their ideas and policy directions. If you look at the four reports, you will see that Henry tried very hard to give a sense of progression from one report to the next. There was not just one global theme, but a few themes that were highlighted by events in various geographic regions. For example, a centerpiece of all reports was the evolving relationships with the Soviet Union and later on with China. Although a regional expert like myself might not be inclined to interpret events in my area in a Cold War framework, we learned that Henry saw issues in his relationships with Gromyko that we had to analyze thoroughly and incorporate our comments within that factor. So we did not have a free hand in writing our reports, but they had to fit into an overall concept. The writing of these reports was a very painful exercise. I don't know how many drafts we used go through; I never kept count, but they were numerous—a dozen or more. Kissinger spent a lot of time personally on these reports. We would begin to write sometime around Thanksgiving; several drafts would be written by the time Nixon went to San Clemente for his annual Christmas holiday vacation. So essentially, the late fall of each year was devoted primarily to the drafting of the reports. Immediately after Christmas, those NSC staffers who were most deeply involved in the final writing—Mort Halperin, Peter Rodman and maybe Winston Lord and Dick Kennedy—would go to work. They worked intensively; we in Washington would be in constant communication with them to fine tune the report. They were interacting directly with Henry; I suspect that most of his time out there was devoted to the completion of the report. There was little interaction with the Cabinet departments during the drafting stage, although

perhaps parts were seen by the bureaucracy before Christmas; there may even have been some first drafts done by the departments, but I can't remember precisely. I think that the final version was passed around for clearance, but Henry wanted to make sure that the final report was done according to his vision. This were Presidential report, not a departmental ones. Only Kissinger could have shaped them.

At the beginning, others also had difficulties fitting their policies into the overall framework. Sisco had participated for many years in UN affairs and was involved in the development of many UN resolutions on the Middle East. He was therefore more attuned to the diplomatic process, working with different verbal formulations. That was the Department's perspective and it worked very hard on a portion of the much larger canvas that Nixon and Kissinger were trying to paint. There was no question that the Department understood the Nixon-Kissinger policy of “linkages”, at least intellectually. But it did have a more difficult time dealing with that concept than Kissinger did, in part because the Department is organized along regional lines and the “linkage” concept really cut across regions. The “linkage” concept was no secret; it was discussed publicly and openly. Sisco was more sensitive to the realities of this policy than others may have been. On the other hand, it was his responsibility to participate in the discussions with Dobrynin. It was Sisco's role to make those dialogues as productive as possible. It was up to the White House to judge whether the results of those talks, the talks about Vietnam, the talks about arms control, etc. were sufficiently productive to make them part of the whole US-Soviet relationship. If one makes the observation, as I sometimes made while on the NSC staff, that the Department of State saw of it its job as conducing relationships with the Foreign Ministries of other countries rather than being responsible for a total relationship with another country, then it is not difficult to see that there might not be a conceptual framework in the Department for thinking about a total relationship in its many facets. On the surface, there is no reason why an Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, under whose guidance relationships with the Soviets is conducted, could not think in global terms, but I think that would have been a rare exception. Therefore, when the focus had to be on a

total relationship between two countries—or “linkage” as we called it—that tended to be done at the White House.

I should add a few words about “linkage”. From my experiences with some Soviet colleagues in the 1980s, after I had left government service, it was quite clear to me that the “linkage” had negative connotation in the minds of the Soviets. They resented the concept. I think Kissinger was using the concept in two ways—not mutually exclusive, but with significantly different emphasis: at a minimal level, he spent a lot of time explaining to Dobrynin during their private talks—as many of us did later in the 1980s in our contacts with Soviet people—that in a society such as ours in the United States, issues became intertwined. For example, I might cite the question of Jewish emigration. Ostensibly, that issue has little relationship to arms control or Vietnam, but in fact, as we all know, that issue became central to the American political process because there were many Americans who had left Russia who felt deeply about the issue. Furthermore, the Jewish community had a deep commitment to allowing the Russians Jews to emigrate. So for domestic political reasons, an American government could not compartmentalize all the issues that had to be resolved with the Soviet Union. That is de facto linkage which can be plotted analytically by issues to show how they intersected at various stages. But that was a fundamental linkage that the Soviets rejected.

The other form of “linkage” which is a more traditional interpretation of the word also applied. There was a feeling, particularly in the 1973-75 period when we were engaged in shuttle diplomacy, that Kissinger was rough on Gromyko because the Soviets had not been very helpful in our Vietnam disengagement efforts. In fact, I think Henry took some pleasure at the time in “sticking his finger in Gromyko's eyes” as a pay-back for what he thought the Soviets had done to us during our exit from Vietnam. That “tit for tat” is the more traditional form of “linkage”, but by its very nature can only be effective if it done at the highest level of governments. This description of the “linkage” concept is not a

historical one because we still use it today in our relationships with other countries—for example, China.

Q: During 1969, there was a change in Assistant Secretaries for NEA. Hart was began the year and he was replaced by Joe Sisco. Did that change have an impact on the operations of the Bureau?

SAUNDERS: There was a change. The two men were entirely different in personality and in their bureaucratic approaches. Joe was well known as a dynamic bureaucrat. He was always quick off the mark as the formulator of strategy papers. He was also much more personally involved than Pete Hart had been in the diplomatic activities related to the Arab-Israeli conflict because he had been the Assistant Secretary for International Organizations. It was his involvement in the UN Middle East activities that led Secretary Rogers to recommend him to be Hart's successor.

I had known Joe when he was the head of IO. So it was not much of a transition for me when he became the NEA Assistant Secretary. In addition, there was continuity in the Bureau because Roy Atherton stayed as Deputy Assistant Secretary. There were some quarters that welcomed the change because Pete Hart and his predecessors had primarily worked in the Arab world. Joe had been exposed to Israeli perspectives during his work in New York. But I personally did not think that the background of the two men made much difference to our common view of the Middle East. Inevitably, sensitivity to the Israeli point of view was essential to working with the Israel government and with the American body politic. A President of the United States could not have an anti-Israeli policy both because Israel was a key to Middle East peace and had to be a willing participant in any negotiations and because he could not have sustained it domestically even if he wanted to.

I don't believe that Joe “cleaned house” in NEA when he took over. Dick Parker continued as Director for Egyptian Affairs, Talcott Seelye remained and was deeply involved in the Jordan crisis that took place in 1970. I don't remember any major changes that Joe made.

I mentioned earlier that I had been in regular contact with foreign embassies. Kissinger did not ask that this practice be changed; NSC staff contacts with foreign diplomats was seen as part of their normal activities. Kissinger himself, as we all know, went beyond the practices of his predecessors and maintained personal contacts with foreign ambassadors. For example, Nixon went to Asia in July 1969, first to witness the return of the astronauts who had gone to the moon, and then on to Vietnam, Thailand, Pakistan, India and Romania. Not only was the trip initiated by Kissinger calling the relevant ambassadors and agreeing with them on specific dates. Only after was done, did the State Department get involved in the planning of the trip.

Another example, which is far better known, was the Kissinger-Dobrynin connection. In the Middle East, as time went on, Kissinger developed personal relationships with the Israeli and Egyptian Ambassadors. So the NSC Advisor's contacts were significant and I think he expected that his staff would support him in these dialogues with our own contacts. Of course, the fact that many of the senior NSC staffers had come from the Department of State helped in this process because they just continued the contacts which they had had while working in the Department. I must readily admit that the distribution of information was hardly systematic. Kissinger kept a lot of the information to himself. Even we, who were members of his staff, had to become accustomed to not knowing what he had said or what his conversations were all about. As time went on, as the Rogers-Kissinger feud developed and then intensified, there were days when I thought it would be a cardinal sin to pass on to Departmental officers anything about Kissinger's private talks. It was tough enough to find out as a member of the NSC staff what Kissinger was up to; if we did manage to find out, it was usually with an injunction not to mention it to the Department of State. Whenever I had conversations with foreign officials, I always shared them with

Roy Atherton, often in the form of “Memcoms.” There were periods when I was literally under instructions not to convey much of anything to the Department. But I think Sisco and Atherton will confirm that even at the height of the Rogers-Kissinger feud, Middle East policy continued on a relatively even keel because the three of us continued to talk about it. I suspect that Joe was under instructions not to tell the White House certain things. But I think the three of us had a sense that government could just not function under the strictures that our principals tried to impose and we just kept communicating, one way or another.

Sisco, Atherton and I began working together in 1967. We worked well together; there was obviously good “chemistry” among us. But even more importantly, there was a real fundamental trust which made it possible to function together, even when our bosses were feuding. All three of us had a professional commitment to the thesis that government could operate effectively. Let me just mention an incident that happened in 1979. I was sitting on a helicopter besides Zbig Brzezinski flying down from Camp David after the conclusion of the Camp David negotiations. We were on the first helicopter because we were supposed to brief the press before the actual signing ceremony. Zbig and I were chatting, very relaxed, relieved and gratified that matters had developed so successfully. He turned to me and with a certain amount of surprise in his voice, he said: “You know, the State Department and the White House worked quite well together!”. He meant that the five person professional team, under Cy Vance, had worked well with the White House team of Brzezinski, Powell and Jordan and others. I don't remember what I responded, but the thought came to mind that Zbig should not have been surprised; that is the way good government functions and it happens normally. Cooperation between a President and his foreign policy team should not have been seen as unusual; it should have been expected. The composition of that team was immaterial; it could have been from the White House or from the Department of State or most likely a combination of the two.

In the late 1960s and the 1970s, there was this strong professional commitment to making government work well. Of course, personalities had some effect on the process, but I

think the trust level and the commitment to effective government is more important. Those factors did not always exist in all areas. But if you review Middle East policy from 1967 through the end of the Carter administration, I think you will find that it was developed by one of the better, if not the best, continuous relationships under three different Presidents and different National Security Advisors. One major factor of stability was the continuous involvement of not only Sisco, Atherton and myself, but also people like Bob Oakley, who succeeded me at the NSC, who was a long time friend of Roy Atherton and a college classmate of mine. Then Bill Quandt returned to the NSC in the Carter administration. He had worked with me on the NSC staff so that he was a known commodity to the other members of the team. These close relationships prevented any “turf” fights; there weren't any in the fourteen years I am covering here.

By the time we worked on the Kissinger shuttles—1973-75—we had a unique diplomatic process and a unique operating way. We worked together as closely as it was humanly possible. It probably happened in other situations as well, but as far as the Middle East policy was concerned there was an intensity of collaboration that was unique and which survived, for example, even after one the key ingredients, Joe Sisco, left government. The rest of us continued to work closely when Vance became Secretary of State and when he went to the Middle East about three weeks after Carter took office. Roy and I went with him, even though by that time I had left NEA and was the Director of INR.

We communicated almost daily by phone and many times, several times per day. We would talk about the events of the previous or present day. We would never hesitate to call each other if we needed some clarification or information. They kept me thoroughly informed of their plans so that I could pass them on to Kissinger. It was constant back and forth, or in bureaucratic terms, we “greased the skids”. One of our major goals was to insure that neither we or our principals were ever surprised; another was to be aware of potential negative reactions on certain courses of action. The irony was that during the first Nixon term, a lot of our communication was surreptitious since our principals would not have fully condoned it. By the time the Kissinger shuttles began, Henry had become

the Secretary of State and the three of us were his support team throughout and flew on all the shuttles with him.The daily contacts were devoted primarily to day-to-day events, but we used our dialogues also to discuss longer range plans. As I mentioned, by the mid 1960s, a rather elaborate NSC system had developed; Joe, after becoming Assistant Secretary for NEA, chaired the lower level meetings during which policy was developed and the options outlined. During these meetings, we used to discuss draft policy papers. Joe may well have been the most astute assistant secretary in the Department in that he fully comprehended that he had to understand the Nixon/Kissinger perspectives. On several occasions, Joe would come to the White House and sit with Kissinger to see how a problem looked from the White House point of view. Joe wanted to make sure that the draft policy papers that would be forwarded from his NSC committee included Presidential perspectives. Very often, I was the vehicle for including those perspectives in the papers.

Let me elaborate a little about the differences between the perspectives of the White House and the Cabinet departments . There are at least two points where the White House will have a different frame of reference than the bureaucracy. The first is that the White House will always consider the President's total foreign policy; its perspective is larger certainly than that of any bureau of any cabinet department. It is also broader than that of any single cabinet department because the President will almost always receive views from a variety of departments, not to mention different parts of a single department such as the Office of the Secretary and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon or different parts of the White House apparatus. The White House perspective therefore has to be more inclusive and the staff will bring to the President a greater range of options than any single department might provide him. Also the White House will be more attentive than any single department to the politics of an issue—i.e. the issue of gathering support for a particular course of action, first in the Congress and then in the electorate. So in these two ways, the President's perspective on an issue is more strategic and more political. One of the major lessons that I learned from my White House experience is the importance of the politics of foreign affairs in terms of relationships with other nations—e.g. linkage

—and in terms of the importance of formulating policy so that it could muster domestic political support. This is not to say that an assistant secretary of State, being an intelligent person, could not acquire those perspectives and by recognizing that he or she is working for the President of the United States, assure that the perspective of a particular President is taken into account as policy is formulated. Joe made a real effort to do just that.

It must be noted that when it came to conversations with Dobrynin and Gromyko, the dialogues were essentially about how to deal with the Middle East conflict at the UN. So Sisco's approach had to encompass the President's concern for the new US-Soviet relationship. He knew that this factor established some constraints on his tactics during the talks. Within those constraints, it was Joe's task to see whether he could find some common grounds with the Soviet on the Arab-Israeli conflict. If he did find some, it was up to the Secretary of State and the President to make a judgement whether that common ground was worth the price that we would have to pay.

Q: You alluded earlier to the importance of personal relationships among world leaders. How did you, as an NSC staffer, judge Nixon's relationships to various leaders and how did you transmit your views to the bureaucracy?

SAUNDERS: I don't want the phrase “personal relationship among leaders” to be interpreted too narrowly. Some observers of diplomatic history have viewed relationships in terms “Did they like each other?”, or “Was the chemistry good?”. Those are good and valid questions and are an important aspect of the conduct of foreign relations. But in a broader sense, the leaders of two nations who meet will bring with them a lot of concerns that have nothing to do with “personal relationships”. Each, for example, will bring the realities of his political support to carry out a certain foreign policy. That reality is not of his making or choosing; it is there. In that case, the leader has to convey that fact to his interlocutor. I don't know what Nixon's chemistry with Brezhnev was; I doubt that it was a particularly close relationship. They may not have liked each other or they may have. But it was not a major issue. The two were leaders of two countries that had an adversarial

relationships—Bill Hyland described them as “mortal enemies” in the title of his book. But the two leaders had to conduct business; they had certain political realities that had to deal with. So when I talk about the relationships between two leaders, I talk less about the personal chemistry and more about the way two human beings convey to each other the reality of a relationship as they represent it to each other. That can include the deepest fears of American citizens of Godless communism and conversely the fear of Soviets of the rapacious capitalist.

One way these realities are conveyed to the bureaucracy is through the participation of someone like Joe Sisco in the meetings between leaders. This information sharing was somewhat easier during the period we are discussing because telephone conversations between leaders were far less common than they are today. This was not a problem during my time in government. So that in most cases, the White House staff was able to monitor Presidential meetings and in large meetings, it was customary for the State Department to be involved. That Department was on occasions deliberatively cut out of meetings; then it fell to Kissinger or an NSC staffer who might have been present to convey the substance of a meeting to the relevant people in the bureaucracies.

Q: Let me raise some specific issues that you dealt with during this period. I would like to start with the question of arms sales. You mentioned how helpful the new NSC systems analysis staff was in evaluating Israeli request? What was your perspective on arms sales, both to Israel and to other countries in the Near East and South Asia area?

SAUNDERS: Let me start with the Israeli request for F-4 aircraft that was approved in 1970. This request was made to us during the Johnson administration. Johnson had recognized that the introduction of aircraft, which were state-of-the-art at the time, into the Middle East could have some destabilizing effect in the area. The most he was willing to do for the Israelis before he left office was to say that we would, in our procurement process, place orders on long-lead time items so that we could reduce the time between

the decision, if positive, to sell and the actual delivery time. By 1970, production of the F-4s was at the hand and Nixon had to make the decision whether to sell them.

The question of the Middle East balance goes back to the early Kennedy period. Truman, for all of his support of Israel, had made the decision that the United States would not supply arms to Middle East countries. That policy essentially stood until the Kennedy administration. Then relatively modest sales of tanks and other ground equipment was approved. The sales expanded somewhat under Johnson. Then came the 1967 war and in its aftermath, the United States began a significant arms assistance program to Israel. The debate in the early 1970s, which had in fact taken place several times in earlier periods, focused on whether the US would make it more possible for Israel to make the political concessions necessary to reach peace with its Arab neighbors if it felt strong and secure or whether it would more likely move in undesirable political directions if it felt that it was militarily over-matched. The Nixon/Kissinger conclusion was that Israel would be more likely to be forthcoming in the peace process if it felt secure and strong.

The second question then became how to achieve the political goal without creating a dangerous arms imbalance in the region. It was our assumption that any significant imbalance would be redressed by Soviet assistance to its “clients”. That would have turned the Middle East into an area where the super-powers would have competed for dominance through an arms race. So we still had the goal of restraint in mind, less perhaps for Middle Eastern reasons then for US-Soviet relationships. In fact, that competition did develop, when, after the F-4s were delivered, during the “war of attrition”, the Israelis began deep penetration raids into the Nile Valley region in Egypt. At a certain point, the Egyptians finally decided to seek assistance from the Soviets for defensive weapons. The Soviets agreed to provide surface-to-air missiles and moved them into Egypt. That provoked a major crisis in US-Soviet relations. The arms race in the Middle East became very much a part of the US-Soviet antagonism; it may in fact have been the predominant factor. In the “war of attrition”, the real struggle was an electronic one between US aircraft and the Soviet anti-aircraft weapons, very much like the one that took place over North Vietnam.

The Nixon/ Kissinger notion was that the Arab countries had to recognize that the Soviets could not provide enough arms and equipment to enable them to cope with American technology in Israeli hands. Kissinger would say that his policies during this period, as he became increasingly involved in US policy in the Middle East, was to convince the Arabs that they not only could not achieve their goals by using the Soviet Union against the United States, but their goals could only be achieved through collaboration with Washington. That was the way he described his objective to his immediate staff and colleagues.

As far as arms sales to Iran was concerned, there are a number of points that should be made. My own recollection of that process begins when I had to provide Kissinger with the State and Defense recommendations on positions to be taken with the Iranians during one of our periodic consultations with them on their military procurement wishes. During the Johnson administration, when we still had significant economic and security assistance programs in Iran, a review mechanism was established to insure that the costs of military procurement would not over-burden the country's economic development, which had a higher priority. At the beginning of the Nixon administrations, the departments forwarded their recommendations for another round of discussions with the Iranians. Kissinger flatly rejected the recommendation; he did not want the United States to be in a position to tell the Shah how to run his country. My guess is that Kissinger, while an NSC consultant and an as an observer of US foreign policy, had acquired a sense that the US was too intrusively involved in essentially domestic issues of foreign countries. So when the opportunity arose, Kissinger put an end to the review process. Sometime later, I accompanied him to the Iranian Embassy in Washington to meet with the Shah during one of his visits to the United States. This may have been at the time of the Shah's first visit to Washington after Nixon's inauguration. The Shah and Kissinger discussed strategic issues, including Vietnam, the Soviet relations, China and other global matters. Kissinger, as well as Nixon, regarded the Shah as a kindred mind, a strategic thinker; they were comfortable with allowing the Shah to decide what should be done in Iran. In light of my

later experiences as Assistant Secretary for NEA, when the Shah was deposed, I believe that the seeds for that downfall were sown during the early Nixon/Kissinger period.

I don't think we were responsible for the Shah's fate, but we might have taken a different approach. I remember a story told to me by Walt Rostow . Soon after he had left government, he visited the Shah to collect some material for his book on “The Stages of Political Development”. He and the Shah discussed the issue in the Iranian context. In that conversation the Shah mentioned that the political base in Iran had to be broadened; otherwise he felt that his son would never ascend to the throne. That indicated that the Shah was well aware of his political position and was wrestling with the problem in 1969.

As I reflected on the early Nixon period and the so-called “blank check” policy, I would ask myself whether, had Nixon taken a different approach to arms sales, that would have made a difference to the Shah's reign? Nixon could have, in his first conversation with the Shah, told him that all leaders had domestic political problems. He could have explained how difficult it was for him to obtain support for his efforts to restructure the US relationships with the Soviet Union. He could have told the Shah that he, Nixon, spent considerable amount of time worrying about developing support from the American body politic for his various policy initiatives. From that beginning, Nixon might have been to develop a dialogue with the Shah about the need and the means to develop public support. This may sound very simplistic, but the fact was that the Shah looked to American presidents as standards and he wanted to measure up to them. He wanted to be in their league. If such a conversation could have taken place in 1969, the Shah might have returned to his country more concerned about his popular support and his need to broaden his political base. Such a discussion might have led the Shah to give greater priority to his need for more public support. I must hastily add that some people, particularly in academic and foreign policy circles, might well laugh me out of town for these sentiments. But I feel that an if inter-connection between leaders is an important factor in foreign policy, then such a discussion might have proven useful and valuable. The “blank check” policy permitted the Shah to do the easiest things—e.g., building his military forces. Of course,

he fancied himself as a military strategist and that made his predilection to military matters even more accentuated. Nixon and Kissinger told the Shah that they would publicly say that our Gulf policy would be based on the twin pillars—Iran and Saudi Arabia— and the cooperation between those two countries, but they also told him privately that they recognized that the Saudis did not have the capability to carry an equal share of the burden. Furthermore, the Shah was informed that the US had no intention of filling the British shoes in the area, even though the British were rapidly leaving. That in fact meant that the United States was relying on the Shah to maintain stability in the Gulf.

There was another component of the policy and that was the Soviet Union. This was particularly relevant to the clandestine aid to the Kurds which we provided through the Shah. That policy was articulated in the same way as we had done often in the Arab-Israeli context through the use of military sales. Nixon and Kissinger felt that Iraq had to be shown that “being a friend of the Soviet Union didn't pay off”—I think I am quoting accurately. The other side of that coin was, of course, that being a friend of the United States would pay dividends. The assistance to the Kurds—regardless of one may think of it now in retrospect—was a way to maintain the Kurdish rebellion to the discomfort of the Baghdad leadership. It was not a situation in which the Soviet Union could help; only the United States could have had some impact. This was another illustration of how the Nixon administration used its relationship with the Shah in the context of the Cold War.

You also have to remember that this was a period during which it was hoped that the United States and the Soviet Union would reach some agreement on strategic arms limitations. The Shah's cooperation was very useful to us in that context because he gave us permission to install listening posts along his border with the Soviet Union so that we could monitor Soviet practices. Ultimately these posts were very useful in the verification of the agreements that were reached.

This is not to say that military sales are just another “commodity” available to the US in pursuit of its foreign policy objectives. Such a characterization tends to ignore something

that I always felt laid at the core of decisions to supply arms to other countries. I was always very conscious that whenever we had any requests for arms, we were dealing with people who were the stewards of their countries' future and survival. In many cases, leaders came to us because they believed that their countries were under serious threat. Whether their analysis was self serving or overly cautious was not material. That was their perception and as leaders of their countries, they were responsible for providing for their people's safety and security—just as our president is for us. In those cases, the provision of arms made military equipment much more than a mere “commodity”, although it had some aspects of it. But the “bottom line” factor had to be that the decision to provide arms was perceived as a matter of life or death in many cases. So we may have used arms sales as a means to foster our objectives, but that was by no means the only rationale. Furthermore, if one looks at the arms sales policies of the principal producers, I doubt that many, if any, of the others worried so much about the impact of their sales as we did. We really did care about destabilizing arms balances and I think we were more responsible in making our decisions than most of the other producers. We did not trivialize arms supply nor did we use them primarily merely as a “currency” or, generally, as economic assistance to American manufacturers. There were a couple of periods when we did actively promote arms sales to reduce our balance-of-payments deficits, but that was before the period we are now discussing. The economic issues did not play a significant role in policy making.

Q: Hal, let me ask you now about the India-Pakistan war. You were in the NSC covering that area when that war broke out. What did we know before the war broke out and what, if anything, did we do to prevent the outbreak of hostilities?

SAUNDERS: I assume you are referring to the Bangladesh secession crisis of early 1971, which was the spark that touched off the war. My response will enable me to add to what I noted earlier about the differences in perspectives between the White House and the Department of State. The secession crisis and the ensuing war took place at a time when Nixon's “opening to China” policy was in germination. It was therefore not

possible under these circumstances for the Department's officials to understand the White House's position on the India-Pakistan dispute. The White House may have been wrong in its views, but its perspectives were bound to be different from the Department because it was working on a different agenda. Kissinger was in the process of working on a strategy that would culminate in his secret trip to Beijing. I only became aware of Kissinger's plans when I accompanied him on his trip to Pakistan in July 1971. He went through Saigon and Bangkok, were I joined the party and accompanied him to New Delhi and Pakistan. On the plane ride from Bangkok to New Delhi, he told me that the was going to Beijing from Pakistan. That was the first time I had ever heard of the plan. The only reason Kissinger told me was because he asked me to write talking points about the Middle East for his upcoming discussions with Zhou En-lai. So up to that point, we could not have taken Kissinger's larger perspective into account. Kissinger understood that the Chinese leadership was asking itself whether the United States would be a steadfast ally. They wanted some assurance that if a relationship between the United States and China were to develop, both countries understood that their linkage was the direct result of their concern about Soviet expansionism. Implicit in that framework, from the Chinese perspective, was the question of whether the United States could be used to offset Soviet pressure if it should ever arise. That was their American “card” question. So Kissinger thought that as the South Asia developing conflict, the Chinese would measure our steadfastness by our willingness to support our Pakistani allies. That would be the standard by which they would judge whether establishing relationships with the US would be worthwhile in the context of Soviet expansionism.

Furthermore, Kissinger recognized that he would have to use Pakistan as his jumping off point if he were to go to Beijing. That point of view naturally resulted in a White House perspective on South Asia considerably different from that of the Department of State, which of course knew nothing about Nixon/Kissinger China initiatives. Daily I used to be on the phone with Chris Von Hollen, who was then the Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA responsible for South Asia. Once he told me that he had been asked to testify before a

refugee subcommittee chaired by Ted Kennedy. The Congress was interested in what the United States might do about the millions of Bengali refugees that had looked for refuge in India. Chris wanted to know what he could say about what the United States might do to alleviate the suffering. I couldn't give him much guidance because, although this occurred probably after Kissinger's trip to Beijing, the White House policy had a China aspect to it that made our position on refugees not particularly palatable. So here we had a classic example of a State Department official focusing on a specific problem in his region—a refugee tragedy that had gripped the world—which was not linked—and could not be meshed—to the global perspective that the President and his National Security Advisor were worrying about.

Kissinger, in fact, saw the Indians as Soviet surrogates trying to dismember an American ally. As I have suggested, in light of his efforts to establish relationships with the Chinese, he could not let such an event go unnoticed and thought that some efforts on behalf of Pakistan were in order. If the Chinese were permitted to doubt America's reliance, then they might have questioned the utility of closer relationships.

When the war broke out, our main objective was to make sure that the Pakistanis would not be seriously damaged. We wanted to stop the hostilities before that could happen, in part, at least, so that the Chinese would perceive us as having come to the assistance of our allies. We set up a Special Action Group, under the chairmanship of the NSC. It met almost daily in the morning. I provided the staff support for that group. That inter-agency working group worked quite well because everyone could support bringing the war to an end, so that further damage could be prevented.

In answer to your question, I don't know that we could have prevented the outbreak of hostilities. All things being equal, we might have been more involved with Pakistan in the pre-war days. The critics said that we didn't adequately urge the Pakistani to ameliorate their policies so that the crisis might have been prevented. I don't know that we fully recognized the impact of Pakistani policies which then resulted in a flood of refugees.

Q: Let me now move to another subject. What was your involvement in Joe Sisco's peace making efforts in 1971?

SAUNDERS: Up to that time, we were working on “package deals”. The consideration for this approach was based on the assumption that no settlement between Israel and its Arab neighbors was possible unless all the pieces of the puzzle had been put in place. Later, after the 1973 war, we went to a strategy of a series of interim agreements that were stepping stones towards an over-all agreement. Sisco's efforts in 1971 was our first attempt to explore an interim agreement. This one related to an Israeli pull-back which would have permitted the re-opening of the Suez Canal. You have to remember that during this period, there was a war of attrition going on. We characterized that agreement as “stop-shooting, start talking”. So Joe's agreement put an end to the shooting, allowing a UN emissary to begin diplomatic negotiations which were not successful.

Sometime in 1971, Kissinger and Dayan held a conversation. That was, from my point of view, really the beginning of a shift in Middle East strategy from the “package deal” concept to an “interim agreements” plan. I don't know that they would characterize their meeting in the same terms; they may not even have articulated these new thoughts, but mentally I think they made a shift. Some efforts at disengagement around the Canal had been tried earlier, so that the idea was not new. Sadat mentioned the possibility earlier in 1971 in one of his speeches. But Sisco's efforts were the first to actually put such a disengagement into effect. The Kissinger/Dayan conversation let the Israelis know that we would not be unreceptive to this new approach.

It was against that background that Joe's efforts began to evolve. By summer, he was working on the force dis-engagement very intensively. Joe, although only an assistant secretary, was chosen because the then Secretary of State did not want to get involved, as Kissinger did later when he was the Secretary. That made the assistant secretary the logical point man. Furthermore, in 1971, the precedent had not yet been established that only the President or the Secretary of State or a special emissary would get involved as

principals in Middle East negotiations. That precedent was established after the 1973 war. So in 1971, the fact that an assistant secretary took on such a delicate chore was not seen as unusual. You also have remember that Joe Sisco was an unusually energetic official who had already demonstrated his capacity for handling difficult diplomatic chores when he arranged the “stop shooting, start talking” initiative. He had been the US government's lead man in the 1969 Sisco-Dobrynin talks that I mentioned earlier. He also had been involved in several delicate negotiations while Assistant Secretary for IO. So he was very experienced and had done many other things besides sitting behind a desk in Washington.

My role in the Sisco efforts were first as part of the team that helped conceptualize the strategy. Then I was part of Joe's support team. Unfortunately, the Sisco efforts came to nought over such details as how many Egyptian policemen could cross the Canal after an Israeli pull-out. I should add a footnote to the Sisco efforts. Several years later, during one of Kissinger's shuttles (probably during the second Sinai agreement negotiations), I remember Henry saying, in a very complimentary way—which was rare for him—: “Joe, you got remarkably far without White House support”. Kissinger was referring to the fact that Joe was able to have the two parties talk about minute details, such as the Egyptian policemen, which was not resolved until the conclusion of the Sinai II agreement. Kissinger recognized that Joe had indeed been masterful in getting the Egyptians and the Israelis to come as far as they did; the failure to reach an agreement laid not in the last details, but I believe that it can be attributed to Israeli last minute “cold feet” about having an agreement at all.

Nixon and Kissinger let Sisco proceed with his negotiations; they did not object and did not take any steps behind the scenes to undermine him, such as had happened earlier with the Rogers speech of 1969. But they took no active participation, undoubtedly because they had many other issues on their agenda—China, Vietnam, the Soviet Union, etc. The President did not bring any pressure to bear on the participants and neither did Kissinger; they just did not get involved except to be kept up to date. So Joe had tacit White House support, but nothing compared to what took place in 1975 on the third interim agreement.

Then the President stood behind his Secretary of State whom every recognized had the President's full confidence and the Secretary was personally fully engaged in the process. It is very likely that in 1971, Kissinger was beginning to develop a Middle East strategy, especially after the Egyptian disillusionment with Soviet support during the war of attrition. By 1971, we probably saw that the Arabs were beginning to turn to the US as a potential driving force for a peace process. And, as I suggested earlier, they were also coming to the conclusion that an overall settlement was probably not in the cards, but that a step-by-step process might be useful and could have some positive effect.

The Spring and Summer of 1971 were tumultuous. To my best of my recollection, Joe returned from his last round of negotiations in the Middle East in July 1971. He went to the western White House to brief the President. He gave his view that that round of negotiations had hit a stonewall and would not progress further. I happened to be in San Clemente at the time because I had just returned with Kissinger from his South Asia journey, a part of which was the secret trip to China. So Joe's efforts were taken at the same time the White House was concentrating on its opening to China, with all of those complexities.

Q: Let me now move to October 1973, when Egypt invaded the Sinai. Where you surprised when Sadat made that move?

SAUNDERS: Yes, I think so. One could argue whether we should have been surprised, but in fact we were. I recall that in the week before the war started, I had a conversation with some one from the CIA's Office of Current Intelligence trying to evaluate some things that were going on in the Middle East. I was told that the Egyptians were adopting the British practice of conducting maneuvers in that area at that time of year. The analyst did not appear alarmed; he viewed Egyptian actions as a continuation of previous British practices. I often thought thereafter how adept scholars and analysts are in seeing history repeated, even in events that took place decades before. Al Haig, who was then Kissinger's deputy in the NSC staff, stimulated a couple of messages to Golda Maier, then

the Israeli Prime Minister, alerting her to our intelligence collection. He wanted to make sure that the Israeli were picking up the same intelligence. So we were not totally without knowledge of events on the ground. I am sure the Israelis also knew what was going on. I think that Maier was very conscious of not repeating the 1967 Israeli policies which were based on the thesis that in order to maintain US support, Israel had to be the victim of an attack rather than be seen as a preemptor, particularly if no one else saw the actions that raised Israel's suspicions. So I think we were surprised to some degree by the Egyptians attack, but not totally.

I had been in New York with Kissinger the day before the attack. I was called and informed that my wife had died. That took me out of the picture for the next two weeks. Bill Quandt took over and when asked, I told him that I didn't need or wished to be kept informed. My thoughts were elsewhere. So I don't really have a feel for what transpired during the war period. For example, one of the questions that continues to be asked about that period concerns Kissinger's involvement in the military aid to Israel. I have never been able to sort that out to my satisfaction because I just wasn't there and I don't know what really happened. Different people, all of whom I respect, have offered different perspectives; I really have no feel for what might have happened. I was not there. I came back the day the cease fire was arranged. Kissinger was leaving for Moscow and was going to stop in Jerusalem afterwards. Haig wanted to know whether I wanted to go on that trip; I declined because I really didn't feel up to it at the time. The next trip I took was the first of the innumerable journeys to the Middle East that we made. Joe Sisco asked me whether I wanted to go. I said that I had to start living some time again and so I did go on that one and all of the following.

I mentioned that Bill Quandt was the NSC expert on the Middle East during the 1973 war. I had first met him in 1969 or 1970 when he was working at RAND. RAND had been hired at the beginning of the Nixon administration to conduct a number of reviews, including one that concentrated on how the NSC handled the paper and information flow. We were then during a time when mechanization was just beginning. As often happened when

someone wanted to study the NSC, our office was selected because it was one of the more interesting ones in the NSC structure. Bill participated in that paper management review because he was a Middle East scholar and therefore understood the substance of the information flow through our office. So we became acquainted during that period. In early 1972, Bill applied for a “Council for Foreign Relations” fellowship. Those fellowships were intended to give government officials experience in the private sector and more often, private sector people experience in government. Bill received a fellowship and joined my office in the Fall of 1972. When that grant expired nine months later, he was interested in staying in my office for another year. I was interested in the same thing and we hired him as a member of the NSC staff, which he was when the war broke out. He and I left the NSC almost at the same time in 1974. He left in the Spring to become a faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania and I left soon thereafter to join Roy Atherton as a deputy assistant secretary in NEA.

Q: Tell us a little more about that move. How did it happen?

SAUNDERS: This was the only time in my government career that I volunteered to change jobs. When Kissinger became Secretary of State in September 1973, I wrote him a note reminding him that I had been on the NSC staff for almost 12 years. I told him that if I could be helpful to him in the Department of State, I was ready for a change and would serve where ever he thought I could be most useful. Brent Scowcroft, then Kissinger's NSC deputy, objected, in a nice way, to my leaving the staff. He already had lost Sonnenfeldt, Hyland and others when Kissinger moved to the Department. He was concerned that the NSC staff would not only be emptied, but also forgotten, although Kissinger would be both the NSC Advisor and the Secretary for State for many months. In fact, I did not leave the NSC until July 1974 or nine months after my note to Kissinger. My trips during this period, which included two shuttles, were as an NSC staffer. By July 1974, Sisco had been promoted to Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Roy had become the Assistant Secretary for NEA; that opened up the deputy position in NEA which was

devoted to the peace process. So it was logical that I would be considered since I had been one of the three officers traveling with Kissinger on his shuttles.

Bob Oakley took my place on the NSC later in 1974. He was an expert in the Middle East. He had a significant background in UN matters, which included many Middle East issues. Furthermore, and perhaps even more importantly, Bob had served in our Embassy in Beirut. One of his functions was to maintain contacts with the Palestine Study Institute, which was the academic arm of the Palestinians in Lebanon. So he was quite familiar with the Palestinian movement. In fact, I believe, that there were certain elements in Israel that had objected to his contacts. Kissinger worried a little about that because if it had that been a strong sentiment, it would have difficult for Bob to operate in an atmosphere in which the Israelis did not trust him. Bob can be outspoken at times and he did on occasions get under Kissinger's skin. Of course, by this time, a small group of us had worked so closely with Kissinger that he knew he could rely on us; he knew our strengths and weaknesses. We had been together for five years; by the end of Kissinger's tenure as Secretary there were five people who had worked with him for the full eight years of his tour in the government. I was one of them.

Q: Did you find your perspective changing markedly as you moved from the NSC staff to being a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State?

SAUNDERS: Not in terms in the way I viewed the issues or in the way I addressed them. There was one significant difference and that was that a deputy assistant secretary has certain institutional responsibilities. I had three or four offices under my supervision which required me to supervise a larger staff than I did in the NSC. As far as the shuttle was concerned, I brought with me from the NSC the responsibility for providing the analytical underpinnings for the many negotiations. It concerned me because I was not sure where the resources that I was accustomed to having in the NSC would now come from. This was particularly true for the CIA input which had been generously provided me not only because of my NSC role, but also because I was an alumnus of that institution and had

a number of friends there. I wondered whether the close intelligence community support that I had enjoyed in the NSC would carry over now that I found myself in the State Department. I really needed two things when I went to State: a) someone in the NEA Bureau who would be able to assist me in obtaining the help I needed to complete the analyses and b) a mechanism which would institutionalize this intelligence community support by a steady stream of information. I talked to people in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR). I quickly learned that they were not really interested in becoming involved. To this day, I still haven't been able to divine the reasons for their negativism, but it wasn't too long after my transfer to the Department that I selected Wat Cluverius, a young Foreign Service officer in NEA, to become the point of contact with CIA so that if I were not available, the intelligence agencies would have some one to call or see. That liaison function should probably have been in INR, but since it seemed reluctant, I chose someone in NEA.

I was fortunate that I had some very good officers working for me. That enhanced my capacity to contribute to the peace process. On the NSC, there were only a couple of us working on the process. In NEA, I could use considerably more resources. That allowed me to submit views to a wider group which helped me obtain more perspectives and more checks on my views.

There is another aspect to moving from one organization to another. The day Henry Kissinger was appointed Secretary of State, he called the whole NSC staff to a meeting in the old Executive Building, which had the only room large enough to accommodate the whole crowd. On that day, he told us that in the first Nixon administration, the primary objective was to “open new doors”; e.g. establish relationships with China, new relationships with the Soviet Union, etc. In the President's second term, he said that emphasize would be placed on institutionalizing the new initiatives and new foreign policy directions. He noted that during the first term, a lot of these new directions had to be undertaken in secret, but that it had become important for the Foreign Service to assume responsibility for the conduct of the new policies and be a vital part of the implementation

process. The President and Kissinger saw the first term as a period for changing foreign policy directions and undertaking new initiatives; the second term was to be devoted to institutionalizing and implementing the new directions. He said that in the Fall 1973.

By July 1974, when I went to the Department, I had been through about nine months of shuttle diplomacy, which essentially consisted of Sisco, Atherton and myself riding on an airplane with Kissinger. The NEA Bureau knew little about what was going on—probably not much more than what it read in the newspapers or from the circular telegrams which didn't reveal that much. It had been Kissinger's dictum, despite his comment to the NSC staff, to Sisco and Atherton that they were not to share any information about the shuttle with their staffs. The consequences of that policy had serious practical consequences.

I remember particularly late May 1974, after we had completed the 35 day shuttle which produced the Israel-Syria disengagement agreement. During this trip, Kissinger had also made arrangements for Presidential visit to the area. We returned to Washington, exhausted, but had to go work immediately on preparations for this Nixon visit, which was to take place two or three weeks later. The Department of State becomes hyper-active when a Presidential trip is contemplated. Briefings books are prepared, detailed agenda are developed, the Secretary and his entourage are prepared, etc. The only problem was that only two of the three of us who traveled with Kissinger had returned to Washington because Roy Atherton had to go to Geneva where the Syrians and the Israelis were to meet under the auspices of the UN military working group, chaired by General Silasvuo, a Scandinavian. This meeting was called to work out the precise implementing mechanics of the agreement. For all practical purposes, that left the NEA Bureau without leadership and without any knowledge of what had been going on while being given the responsibility for preparing for a major Presidential trip.

My task upon return was to write a strategy paper for the Presidential trip to the Middle East—at Henry's instructions. I was then still on the NSC staff. I well remember getting up at three o'clock a.m. and writing away at home on a pad of paper which I then brought

to the office, had it typed and sent it to Kissinger. It was one of the few times that I got a strong compliment from Kissinger. He read the paper right away and sent it back with a note saying that it was exactly right, but that I then had to get the NEA Bureau to draft country strategy papers and briefing books within the framework that I had laid out. He sent the same message to the NEA Bureau. A number of the officers in the Bureau called me and then they went to work on writing country papers intended to develop implementing strategies. These papers were sent to the Secretary. One night, after 8 o'clock, I received a call at home from someone in the Department. The Secretary was very unhappy with the Bureau's papers and wanted all of them rewritten so that he could give them to the President at breakfast the following morning. So I want back to the Department and sat down in Atherton's office with each NEA country director reviewing each paper and suggesting different approaches or phrasing. I had to sit with the NEA officers because Roy had followed Kissinger's dictum and had not informed his staff of what had transpired on the shuttles. The consequence was a) poor papers for the President and b) major revisions under my personal supervision, even though I was an NSC staff member and not part of the Department of State at all. Kissinger wanted each country paper to capture the flavor of the peace process strategy because he wanted the President to able to push the subtleties of the strategy in his conversations with leaders he would meet in the Middle East. After all, these leaders had been hearing this strategy from Kissinger for these many days and months. They had to hear the same thoughts, if not words, from the President of the United States. So the papers had to reflect Henry's thoughts and views and expressions so that the substantive points that Nixon was to make would reinforce those made by Kissinger. There was of course no way that the NEA country directors could do that adequately, not having had any background or information on the shuttle process. These were to be Kissinger's memos to Nixon. Under any circumstances, the task would have been difficult for someone who had not been on the airplane with Kissinger for extended periods and understood the subtlety of his thought process, but without adequate information, it was an impossible task.

I transferred to the Department a few weeks after having supervised the drafting of the Country Strategy papers. When I became a deputy assistant secretary, I met with the office directors and reminded them of those unhappy days in May. I readily admitted that the fault did not lie with them nor was it mine, since I had been asked to help by the Secretary, even though as a “turf” matter, my involvement was not appropriate. I added that I thought the matter had been concluded in a friendly and effective manner. I then went on to discuss my dilemma, which was created by two Kissinger objectives: a) the one he expressed to the NSC staff which was he wanted to institutionalize the conduct of foreign policy and b) the order that Sisco and Atherton were not to share any of their information with their staffs. I told my office directors that I would abide by the first objective and included each of them, and those members of their staffs who might be useful, in the policy formulation process. They would have access to all the information available to me and would seek their assistance, thoughts and support. However, I had to insist that when a memorandum was drafted to the Secretary on the Middle East peace process, I would have to be shown as the drafting officer. I emphasized that I did not want any of them to lie to any of our principals—that is, to deny having been involved in the process—but to the extent they could avoid any questions on that issue, that would be appreciated because we might become involved in some fiction. The revelation of the whole truth would be embarrassing to them, to me and many others. But I did want to engage in this slight legerdemain because I felt that was the best way to serve the Secretary, the Department and the whole country. I was totally in agreement with Henry's statement to the NSC staff; the foreign policy process should have been institutionalized if it were to be effective. I thought that a common effort was needed and in fact, all my staff responded magnificently to the benefit of the process. I am sure that Henry knew what I was doing; I could have not personally and alone produced all the papers that were sent to him from NEA. But I don't think he really cared; what he was getting served his needs; there were no leaks and he knew that with Roy and myself in the Bureau, he had an operation on which he could rely. He did not need to—and didn't—give NEA his daily attention; the process was working well. I don't remember that issue of not sharing

information with NEA staff members ever arising again. The NEA staff, of course, were delighted to become part of the process and made substantial substantive contributions.

Q: Were you able to maintain the high level of your analysis as Deputy Assistant Secretary as you were as a senior member of the NSC? Or did the day-to-day minutiae take up so much of your time that you had not enough left for thinking?

SAUNDERS: Since I was able to marshal the human resources at my disposal, there was at least as much, if not more, analytical work done. The willingness of the intelligence community to work with NEA directly was extremely important and useful. There were a number of illustrations that support my view. In 1975, when we working on the last of the three interim agreements—Sinai II—, we needed substantial analytical support. I relied heavily on CIA, Cluverius and others for work on two issues. Sadat had laid down two conditions for his agreement to Sinai II: a) Israel would have to leave the oil fields in the Gulf of Suez and b) Israel would have to abandon the two Sinai passes (Mitla and Giddi). The first condition required us to have some knowledge of the oil fields if we were to serve as mediators. Fortunately, there was a woman in CIA who apparently had devoted much of her career to a study of oil fields. With her help, we actually ended up knowing more about the size and location of the underground reserves than the Egyptians did, even though, they, with the help of the ENI—the Italian government firm—had operated those fields for almost ten years. During the shuttle, when we were negotiating a demarcation line between the Egyptians and the Israelis, the latter gave us a proposal which left most of the oil rigs on the Egyptian side. We knew, however, that most of the reserves would still remain in Israeli hands if that line stood as proposed. We had the capacity, through over-head photography, to show the Israelis that their proposal just wouldn't meet Sadat's requirements. In fact, if the line were to be drawn where proposed, our mediation role would be greatly jeopardized because when the Egyptians found out that the reserves were in still in Israeli territory, they would feel that they had been double-crossed and would find it very difficult to work with us and the Israelis thereafter. I have always believed that the Israelis knew what they were doing, although I have no way of proving it. So

we told the Israelis that their proposal, even though on the surface meeting Egyptian demands, was just unacceptable. CIA's capacity to have that analytical knowledge saved our role as an honest broker. This was just one illustration of how a broadened base of bureaucratic support assisted us in pushing the peace process forward.

Another illustration of the importance of a broadened institutional support for the peace process came when Simka Dinitz, then the Israeli Ambassador in Washington, came to us on the Saturday before were to leave on the shuttle which led to the Sinai II agreement. He brought a map with a demarcation line drawn on it and said to Kissinger that that was the line that would bring about an agreement. As soon as he left, Henry called me and asked me to check out the map. I had some advance notice that Dinitz might do that; so I had the National Photo Intelligence Center ready in my office to look over the map. They had their photographs spread all over the floor. Then they drew the Israeli suggestion on their photographs and it became immediately clear that the line did not place the passes in Egyptian hands; in fact, it did not touch on the passes at all. I reported these finding to Kissinger who instructed Sisco to have Dinitz come back to the Department to review our findings. Henry insisted that Israelis redraw the map so that the passes would clearly be in Egyptian hands and he wanted that done by the time he got to Jerusalem. That was just another illustration of the analytical capacity that a bureaucracy can provide which is invaluable to peace negotiations. I should mention that it was this episode that Dinitz used later in a complaint to Kissinger that I was “anti-Semitic”.

So even though I had broader responsibilities as Deputy Assistant Secretary than as NSC staffer, I had more assistance and much of the day-to-day work was done by the office directors and their staffs. If all of that work had been dumped on my desk, I just would not have gotten around to it. Being in a Cabinet Department, there was a structure that could be relied upon to do much of the immediate; so that essentially I still had sufficient time to devote to the analytical support for the peace process. However, I think that my experience in NEA may have been somewhat different from that of a career Foreign Service officer. I had had an opportunity to work in the White House and therefore had

had considerable exposure to the Presidential perspective. I had also worked closely with Kissinger and later Vance and therefore was more closely attuned to a Presidential or Secretarial agenda than an Embassy might have been. I did learn “to answer the mail”, as Roy Atherton often said, but honestly, I let my staff do that so that I could devote as much of my attention as possible to the Presidential and Secretarial agenda.

This problem became even more acute later when I became Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs. I would start every day with a clear picture of my agenda, but I had to constantly fight for time to work on that agenda because all the pressures were to be diverted to someone else's agenda. The issues that were on someone else's list would often take an hour of my time. I don't want to imply that these other issues were necessarily unimportant or trivial; they were often the concerns of Seventh Floor principals, but they were just not what I felt I had to devote my attention to on that day. So it was a constant battle to carve out enough time in the working day to move my agenda forward. Fortunately, most often I could look to someone in the Bureau to work on the issues of interest to others; that is a luxury that an NSC staffer doesn't have because his support staff, if he or she has any at all, is very limited.

My principal responsibility as Deputy Assistant Secretary was the peace process. I was able to devote the necessary time to it. It was much more difficult as Assistant Secretary because there were many issues that fell in my area of responsibility. There were a lot of issues that needed immediate attention, but fortunately I had a staff that I could rely on and much of that burden therefore fell on them. Even with that help, I was spread much more over many different issues as Assistant Secretary, so that I could not concentrate on the peace process as I did in my other governmental positions.

Q: I just a couple of additional questions about the shuttle. In addition to Kissinger, Sisco, Atherton and yourself, were there any other “regulars”?

SAUNDERS: Bob Oakley, after he took my job in the NSC. He was with us for the trips in the second half of 1974 and in 1975, although that period was not quite as intense as the first six months of 1974, during which we produced the Egyptian-Israeli and the Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreements.

Q: What was your specific role in the shuttle team?

SAUNDERS: I have already described my responsibilities for the preparation of the analytical material prior to the departure of the team. Essentially, I was responsible for gathering all relevant material, putting it in a meaningful context and submitting it to Kissinger, usually in the form of a briefing book.

Once we were on site, we—essentially Roy Atherton and myself—devised a system which we used for Kissinger's shuttles and later on, for Vance's participation in the peace process. That system centered on a daily check list.

My task changed in the sense that the Sinai II agreement was followed by an election year—1976. It was quite apparent that in an election year there would not be a major Middle East mediating effort. It would have been too sensitive; in any case, the political leadership was preoccupied with the election.

By 1976, I was the Director of the Bureau for Intelligence and Research (INR) in the Department of State. A number of us decided that 1976 would be a good year for a pause in the negotiating effort which would allow us to examine our past efforts and research future possibilities. Bill Kirby had just returned from serving in the Consulate General in Jerusalem where he had frequently been the duty officer and therefore had spent many nights working with me and had supervised the preparation of the next day's checklist and other documents after I had gone to bed. So he was familiar with our efforts and shuttle diplomacy. He was assigned to INR and I thought he could be assigned to work on our Middle East research efforts.

We were particularly interested in examining more closely the Palestinian dimension of the problem. We got CIA involved; we even tapped some of the Department's external research funds, which INR controlled, to contract with the American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institution for input into the research effort. AEI particularly provided us with some useful material. I was still responsible for the development of the research effort to support the Middle East analytical process. We took advantage of my new responsibilities as Director to develop better knowledge and understanding of the new phenomenon—the Palestinian involvement—that had appeared on the scene in the Fall of 1975, but had not yet matured yet as a central feature in the negotiations.

Q: One more question on the shuttle. Was it very difficult to encompass in your considerations the large picture when you are focusing on a myriad of details?

SAUNDERS: Not really because we all, and Henry especially, saw the peace process as what I later described as “a series of mediated agreements imbedded in a larger political process.” I did that after having left government while writing about the process in retrospect. That was the lesson I drew for our efforts. When we went to the Middle East, we always stopped in a number of Arab capitals, before and during the negotiations. On several occasions, I was sent to Algeria or to Saudi Arabia to brief the leadership of those countries on what was happening at the negotiating table. We would regularly send letters from the plane to various Arab leaders to keep them advised on the peace process. Occasionally, the group went to brief the key leaders. It was quite clear that we were trying to build a political base of support for our efforts among the Middle East leadership group. We were always mindful that all the political leaders in the area, and particular the Israeli ones, needed to be able to cite enough advantages from the any concluded agreements so that they could gather enough domestic political support when signing time came around. That part of the peace process gave me a large dose of the political context within which we were operating. When we worked on the details, the larger context was never forgotten. We fully understood that whenever we drafted an agreement, we would

push the details as far as we could, recognizing that some desirable goals could not be met at that time, leaving those issues to the next agreement. What we could not achieve during one stage became literally and figuratively the basis of the check list for next set of negotiations. The American team members might not phrase this approach in the same words as I have just done, but Henry Kissinger's notes used in his conversations with the leadership in the Middle East reiterated over and over again the logic of the Middle East peace process, its short run achievements and its longer range objectives. So our strategy was articulated over and over again and I would guess that you can find it also in the backgrounders to the press.

I can give you a marvelous example that the overall strategy was always present when we worked on the details. One day, during the Israeli-Syrian shuttle, we returned to Jerusalem from Damascus. We met with Israeli officials in Prime Minister Golda Maier's conference room. The issue on this day was how many artillery pieces or tanks with long range guns could be permitted in a limited armament zone to be established on the Syrian side of the buffer zone. The Syrians had given us a number. The Israeli, I guess, had given us a lower number even before we went to Syria. The check list for that day would undoubtedly have the two numbers on it. Henry told the Israeli the number that Assad had given him. Golda Maier, in a passionate statement, said that the Syrian number did not represent disengagement; it was just too large for the Israeli to swallow. She became very emotional and said that what we were negotiating could not be called a “disengagement agreement”, if the Syrian numbers had to be part of the final document.

At that stage, Kissinger did what he occasionally did during the shuttles. He stopped being the Secretary of State of the United States, who was trying to mediate an agreement. He became Doctor Kissinger, an American professor, serving as a consultant to the State of Israel, who, incidentally, had shared the Jewish experience. This metamorphosis was done in an very impressive, subtle and admirable fashion. Everything he did was perfectly proper, but somehow he managed to change from his official role as a mediator to that of a counselor. That afternoon, he said that for a moment he wanted to leave the number

issue aside. He then began to remind all in attendance of the fundamental strategy that he was pursuing. He noted that the interim agreements were designed to acquire control over the peace process, to push the Soviets out of their involvement in the area and to obtain European support for the peace process by getting the oil embargo lifted. (That embargo, which had been imposed in 1973, had been lifted as a consequence of the first Egyptian-Israeli disengagement agreement in January 1974 and the promise of a Syrian-Israeli disengagement). He laid all of these goals and by doing so, he pushed back the Israeli gloom. He reminded them gently that what was at stake that day was the basic strategy and the long range goals. The number of artillery pieces and tanks was only incidental to the general direction and final goals to be achieved. Kissinger painted that big picture exquisitely, without giving offense to any one around the table, completely analytically and masterfully propounded. Maier took her team off into her office, adjacent to the conference room which we were using. After a period of time, the Israelis returned and Maier told Kissinger that he understood how the Israelis felt and that he was free to do whatever necessary to get the agreement; she would trust him to get the best number he could get from the Syrians.

I characterized Kissinger's roles as I did because I think it was a fair reflection of the proceedings. It seemed perfectly natural. In his own mind, he was only articulating the grand strategy that we were pursuing. He may not have been conscious of his metamorphosis. He might be surprised by my characterization, but he might well agree with it. It also possible that he changed roles quite consciously because he was most often very deliberate about his words and actions. He changed his roles time and time again. What I am trying to emphasize is that we always lived with the long-term strategy, regardless of the short term efforts that we might be making. Before each trip, I would write a memorandum analyzing the situation then in existence, the long term goals we were trying to achieve and how that particular trip was to move the negotiations forward along the long range path. So everything we did was intended to move the process further along towards the long range goals. The detail agreement was another step down the

road. When we working on how the Israelis might be convinced to leave the Mitla passes during the negotiations of the second Sinai agreement, we were concerned that by doing so, we were probably foreclosing any further Israeli concessions on the Sinai. When the second Sinai agreement was signed, most of us thought that the step-by-step strategy for the Sinai had come to an end. Later on, of course, we reexamined our views and indeed achieved further progress. This is just another illustration of how conscious we were, as were negotiating agreements on many details, of the long range strategy and the relationship of each detail to the end of the process. It was a marvelous atmosphere which brought out the best in all of us because we had a fundamental analysis, a long term strategy and a myriad of details to be negotiated. The resolution of each detail would eventually achieve our long term objectives. We, of course, were always sufficiently flexible to correct our long term strategy if current circumstances so dictated.

The second Sinai agreement, which was negotiated between the Fall of 1973 and 1974, was a good illustration of the fits and starts that we inevitably encountered as we planned the next steps. When I went to INR, I was succeeded by Pete Day in Deputy Assistant Secretary position in NEA. He had been the Consul General In Jerusalem and therefore familiar with the peace process, at least from that vantage point. Pete told me that Roy Atherton had described that job as being the “architect of the next step”. I think that was an apt description because we in fact had became accustomed to operate in that fashion; that is always keeping the next step in mind as we progressed along the long term strategy road. The details never drove our strategy, but would occasionally require mid-course corrections or additions to our goals. For example, we had not contemplated the stationing of US personnel in the Sinai passes to monitor the agreements. It was an idea that was introduced in June 1974 by one of the other parties. I don't think we would have ever suggested it or volunteered our people for such a task. But when it appeared to be important to the Israelis, we went along and launched a very successful effort. Our strategy didn't change, but here was an implementation step that we had not considered, but since it was perfectly consistent with our long term goals, we acquiesced.

Our willingness to station monitors made the agreement more acceptable to the Israelis without foreclosing the possibility of the whole Sinai being returned to Egypt as was later done. So we were certainly willing to entertain new ideas as long as they were consistent with our long term strategy.

The strategy memorandum outlined the goals that we hoped to achieve during a particular trip. The daily check list listed the people that Kissinger was to see on a specific day. For each person to be seen, we listed the minimum agreements that Kissinger had to get in order to fulfill the needs of our strategy. When we began the shuttle diplomatic track, each meeting needed a separate check list; so for a particular day we sometimes ended up with two or three check lists. The opening paragraph of a check list would remind Kissinger what his last meeting brought out as a requirement. That is, if he were to see Rabin for example, we check list might well begin: “During your last meeting with Sadat, he asked that the Israeli give..... Sadat said he need that concession to make a deal work. You said that you would try to ask the Israeli for that concession”.

After a meeting, on the way to the airport, either by helicopter or car, I would take the next meeting's check list and bring up to date in light of what had transpired at the meeting we just left. That new check list would include any comments that were to be passed on to the next interlocutors and a list of items under negotiations that had to be discussed further and resolved. So the check list in fact consisted of a record of each meeting, the progress made towards our goals and the next steps that had be taken to move the process forward. When we shuttled between Egypt and Israel, we prepared a new check list—at least three every day—before meeting each side and then a final update at the end of the day in preparation for the next day's first meeting. From the point of view of a historian, those check lists are an invaluable resource because he or she can easily trace the path of the negotiations, literally step-by-step. It was my job to up-date the check list continually. It was of course made easier by the fact that Roy and I had worked so closely together for so many years that we barely needed to speak to each other. We knew full

well what was on the other person's mind. If he had been concentrating on a special issue, he would sometimes give me something for the next day's check list.

As the shuttle progressed, we began to add draft paragraphs of the agreements being negotiated to the check list. The paragraphs had brackets for certain portions where no agreement had been reached and negotiations over specific language agreeable to both sides became part of the next day's meetings with each side. The text were typed up so that they could be presented to each side, clearly indicating where changes had been made since the last time it had been discussed and with the language yet to be agreed to clearly indicated.

This system was a device that Roy and I developed as the best means of trying to keep track of fast moving developments. The system was a new one for us, but then none of us had ever participated in shuttle diplomacy. It was important that somehow we keep track of all the requirements, demands and wishes that each side kept throwing at us. There were dozens of questions and answers given every day which had to be remembered and tracked. These had to be later woven into the text of agreements and therefore had to be systematically recorded and tracked. The need to keep track of a myriad of details forced us to invent the check list system.

These were the days before computers were available; all of the updating had to be done manually. The principal capitals were only an hour's plane ride from each other. Then we had a few minutes going to and from an airport. Not much time! We had to compressed the time we had to up-date the check lists. The first few trips were manageable because I only had to update the check list. By the time we were getting to the end of the shuttle, we not only had the check lists, but also texts and annexes. We were by then dealing with a significant volume of paper, all of which had to be continually updated. We had two typists with us; they had to retype many of the pages during each flight. Of course, we also had a Xerox machine on the plane, but we soon learned that when the plane began to descend for landing, the machine would reprint on only the top part of the page. That even further

compressed the time available for typing and reproduction, particularly when we had pilots who preferred longer approach paths.

I remember that on one trip, Joe and I were frantically collating. One would hardly expect that to be in the job description for the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. In any case, on that occasion, Kissinger came out of his compartment and looked at a page and said that he had specifically instructed us to make certain changes on that page. I said: “Oh, hell, Mr. Secretary, there are too many pages!”. But I took the page and gave it to the typist to redo. But by the time she got finished, we were already on our glide path and couldn't reproduce the page. When we landed at Giannakla airfield—a military base—in the Nile Delta (a wine grape growing area with a Greek name), we had to copy this page in 110 degree temperature while the Egyptian Foreign Minister was waiting outside to greet us. I asked the pilot over the intercom not to stop the plane but to keep it rolling on the ground until we had all the copies made and collated. I don't know where he went, but he taxied long enough for us to finish the job. The party on the ground that was awaiting us must have thought we had lost our marbles.

We worked very hard on these flights and managed to get a lot of work accomplished, even under very trying circumstances, as I described earlier.

In addition to revising the check lists and agreements after each meeting, I also sat in on every meeting. We spread the responsibility for note-taking around. Kissinger demanded verbatim texts of the meetings. I never transcribed those notes I took; I never had time for that. I had books full of these notes which we used as the record of the meetings. But I don't know that they were ever fully transcribed, but we never felt that we needed that. With the notes that Joe, Roy and I took, we had a full record of what transpired.

The check list was maintained for all the shuttles. It became almost immediately obvious that it was the right system for our task. Kissinger found it very helpful; he would use the check list during the meetings to make sure that all the pertinent issues were covered. His

copies of those check lists would show notations and checks to show that he had covered all the topics. It became the basic working document for him. It worked so well so that when Roy and I took our first trip to the Middle East with Vance about three weeks after Carter's inauguration, we used the same system. Roy and I agreed that Vance had never done one of these Middle East shuttles although he had had considerable experience in the peace making process in Cyprus. He hadn't asked us for the check list, but we decided we would use it anyway and it proved to be as helpful to Vance as it had been to Kissinger. Vance's efforts in the Middle East were not as intensive as Kissinger's, but the process of going from one party to another and back again was the same.

Q: Between meetings, drafting of check lists and texts, analyses, when did the team have time for discussions?

SAUNDERS: On the run. I should note that our days were filled by other things in addition to meetings, updating of check lists and texts. For example, on the last flight of almost each day, Kissinger sent back a report to the President. He was very careful with both Nixon, who was under domestic political fire at the end of 1974, and then Ford, who was new to the job without ostensibly much foreign policy experience, to keep them current on the negotiations, in some detail. With Nixon, he was acutely conscious not to leave the impression that he considered the President to be on the way out and that therefore he, Kissinger, would handle the negotiations on his own. He knew that he had to have the President in full support; otherwise he would not have had as much clout as he needed to make progress. He could not afford with either Nixon or Ford to appear to working on his own; it was vital to the success of the mission that all participants understood that Kissinger had the full support of the President of the United States under all circumstances. So on most nights, on the last flight for the day, Joe, Roy and I (and Bob Oakley later) would sit down and draft the report. When we got on the plane, we would split responsibilities for drafting a paragraph or two each issue discussed during the day to be sent to the President. This report to the President did not get any distribution outside the White House and I would guess very little, if any, inside. Exceptions to this rule were

made under special circumstances. For example, if Larry Eagleburger was not with us on the trip, he might get a copy from Brent Scowcroft. The NEA Bureau did not receive copies and was essentially uninformed until I would return and briefed my staff.

In addition, on a number of occasions, Kissinger would want to send his personal report to some other Arab leaders, such as Sadat during the Syria-Israel shuttle. Sometimes, messages would be sent to King Hussein or the President of Algeria or the King of Saudi Arabia. So we had to draft those as well. You can easily see, that those last flights of the day were extremely busy, not only with these messages, but also with an update of a check list because we might still have another meeting after landing. Kissinger would very quickly give us what he wanted to report to the President or Sadat or the other Arab leaders. Each of us would undertake to do certain of these messages or portions. Our secretaries were worked very hard for that hour in flight especially since most of the messages were dictated first. The check list I did manually because it didn't really lend itself to dictation.

On occasions, Kissinger would call us to his hotel room. There were no scheduled staff meetings, but when the occasion demanded it, he would bring us together to discuss an issue or issues. These sessions were very much ad hoc; there was no set pattern, but brain-storming was done as required and as time permitted.

There were times of course when Joe, Roy and I—and later Bob—would meet together to consider various issues. Out of those meetings often came ideas that we put in front of Kissinger. It is impossible to trace the genesis of any particular idea. It may have come during these sessions or when we met with Kissinger or during a coffee-break, We were completely steeped in the peace process and thought of little else. So ideas would spring forth at any time. We might then discuss them with Kissinger or put them in a memorandum.

Kissinger handled the press briefings usually personally. Occasionally, a particular reporter would be sent to one of us by Henry to answer a specific question or sometimes Henry would ask one of us to go a particular reporter to discuss a specific issue. But the "unidentified senior official" who was often quoted in the press was always Henry.

Q: I would like to ask again about the fatigue factor. Was it an important aspect of the shuttle?

SAUNDERS: The only time it weighed on my mind at all was in the 35 day shuttle between Syria and Israel. Then, after 25 or 26 round trips to Damascus, I did wonder how much more we could endure. Fortunately, Assad gave in before we did.

Q: What happened when the team returned to Washington in terms of Congressional and interest group briefings?

SAUNDERS: We would brief these groups in a number of different ways. First of all, on the return plane ride, if there had been a significant development, we would draft talking points to be used by the President during a breakfast he would host for the Congressional leadership. We would also use the plane ride to start the bureaucracy moving in preparation for the Congressional briefings and other discussions such as requesting CIA to produce new maps. Kissinger held his own meetings with members of Congress, sometimes publicly as in hearings. In some cases, if an agreement had been reached, Roy or I would testify, as I did for example after the Sinai II agreement.

We would brief the Arab ambassadors and the Israeli interest groups, except those very few which insisted on being personally briefed by the Secretary. I did most of the briefings of the ambassadors or their staffs. Many of the Washington embassies had specialists on the Middle East; I would brief them so that they could report to their governments. I did most of those briefings; there were some rare exceptions, but in the main, the responsibility for briefing of diplomats fell to me.

You have to remember that only Roy and I were fully concentrated on the Middle East. The Secretary and Joe had many other issues they had to deal with, so that much of the "clean-up" work that had to be done after each shuttle fell to the two of us.

Q: What did the team do when in Washington in preparation for the next round?

SAUNDERS: That of course depended where the negotiations stood. It is worth noting that in the period from the end of the 1973 war to the Fall, 1975, three interim agreements were negotiated. For every agreement, there were two or three trips to the Middle East. In March 1975, we had a shuttle that ended with no agreement. We ultimately achieved that agreement in August after another shuttle. For every agreement, there were shuttles to prepare the way. In addition, there were visits by involved foreign ministers to Washington, which were an important part of the process. So the process never really stopped. There was no pause; it was a continuing process which by its very nature forced us think of next steps all the time. The strategy was therefore continually evolving. When a visitor would come to see the Secretary, we would send up the equivalent of a check list which would update the circumstances and list the actions that needed to be taken, either by us or the visitor, to move the process forward. So the process was constantly evolving and therefore needed continual attention.

In addition, our ambassadors needed guidance, both in terms of general up-dating and in answer to specific questions that may have been posed to them. Hermann Eilts was particularly important in that respect in light of his close relationship to Sadat. Sadat and Eilts would have discussions continually which required Washington involvement. Some of the issues raised by Sadat needed Kissinger's personal involvement and sometimes even the President's. The constant and continuing nature of the process required Kissinger's frequent involvement, which meant that even after I became Director of INR in 1975, I had to travel with Kissinger wherever he went on an extended trip so that he would have someone at his side to handle matters that involved the Middle East peace process. Only Roy or I could have handled that chore, but I, as Director of INR, could be part of the

Kissinger entourage without raising any speculation. For example, I went with Henry to Africa, Latin America, China, Japan. I did do work related to my INR responsibilities, but I went along also to help him out on Middle East issues. Even after being transferred to INR, I continued to carry the analytical responsibilities, including the drafting of the strategy papers and the check lists.

Q: Let me now turn to your appointment as Director of the Bureau for Intelligence and Research (INR). First of all, how did that appointment come about?

SAUNDERS: By November 1975, I had worked with Kissinger for 6 years since the beginning of the Nixon administration, both at the NSC and in the Department of State. When he became Secretary of State, he had appointed Bill Hyland as Director of INR. Bill had worked on US-Soviet relations for Henry and was highly regarded. Kissinger wanted as head of INR some one who had an analytical capacity and an approach to research that he understood and supported. Sometime in 1975, Larry Eagleburger, then Kissinger's Executive Assistant, called me and told me that Hyland was leaving the Department to go to work for Brent Scowcroft as the Deputy National Security Advisor. Larry wanted to know whether I would be interested in being considered as a possible successor. Later, Kissinger called me to ask me take the job.

I had worked very closely with Kissinger during the Middle East shuttles and even before that, as the senior NSC staff officer on Near East and South Asia affairs. Kissinger had always placed a large premium on the development of analytical underpinnings for policy reviews and decisions. That was true for the Middle East issues as well as all others. I think he must have felt that I had the experience necessary, as Bill Hyland had, to bring together the Department research capabilities in his service as a policy maker. It was clear that the Director's role would take me beyond the Middle East and into issues arising in all parts of the world. You might remember that I entered the US government in 1956 as a junior officer trainee in CIA. During my training, I was imbued with the view that intelligence analysis should not be mixed with policy making. This thesis stemmed from the concern

that if an intelligence analyst had a stake in policy formulation, he or she might be tempted to skew the analysis to support a specific point of view. But during my years in the NSC, I learned that unless there was some serious interaction between policy makers and intelligence analysts, the latter could not be expected to produce insights that might be useful to the former. Normally, in an organization devoted exclusive to analysis, the output is entirely depended on the interests of the scholars, which may be entirely different from those of the policy makers. That means that a policy maker must ask the questions to which he wants answers. If he or she doesn't know what the right questions might be, that has to be drawn out or they might be posed by someone who understands the issues that the policy maker is addressing. The important aspect of analysis is not its distance from the policy maker, but its relevance to the issue that concern the policy maker.

Sometimes, the analysis then forces the policy maker to review his or her assumptions and premises; sometimes, the analysis reaches into the future and attempts to predict possible consequences of a certain policy course. A good analysis will state its assumptions and suggests that if the predicted outcome is not satisfactory to the policy maker, it might well include alternatives which might result in more acceptable outcomes. It seemed possible to me that an intelligence analyst could engage a policy maker in an analysis without either intentionally or by accident shaping the outcome of the policy maker's conclusions. I admit that this is a narrow line to walk, but when I went to INR, I made the point to my staff that, although I certainly understood the fear of mixing analysis and policy making, I suggested that they leave their offices occasionally and talk to the assistant secretaries and their deputies to at least find out what current concerns those policy makers had and how an intelligence analyst might be useful to them. I think Kissinger understood that I had already engaged in that kind of analytical process and I guess he found it useful; he must have thought that I could continue and perhaps expand on the process initiated by Bill Hyland to make analysis useful to the policy maker.

By December 1975 the general feeling was, particularly in Kissinger's mind, that there wouldn't be any dramatic Middle East initiatives in 1976 since that was an election year.

While 1974 saw the conclusion of two interim agreements after shuttles, we did not expect another one in 1976. That probably eased whatever concerns there might have been in my re-assignment to INR. Late 1975 and 1976 were to be devoted to further studies of various aspects of the Middle East situation. As I mentioned, I was replaced by Pete Day. His main role in 1976 was to stay in touch with the parties so that a dialogue could be maintained and so that we could assess where the peace process might go after the US elections. We could not in 1976 engage in active mediation, but we used the year primarily as a period of reflection. We, in INR, in collaboration with my colleagues in NEA, decided that the focus of our analysis should be on the Palestinian dimension of the problem.

In November 1975, I testified before Congressman Hamilton's House Foreign Affairs Near East subcommittee. There I was asked how the Palestinians might become engaged in the peace process. That set a public stage for the recognition that the Palestinians had to be drawn into the negotiations. That led me to establish an informal working group which included representation from CIA and DIA to try to pull together all the information available to the US government on the Palestinians. Where we had discernible questions —for example, who owned the land on the West Bank, what were the various categories of land ownership, where were the Palestinians living in relation to what was called “publicly owned” lands, etc.—we assigned people to research the issues. We also looked at Israeli settlements—their location, size, composition—because we knew that we would have to deal with that issue whenever discussions about the West Bank started.

Using INR research funds, we sought some proposals from some of the Washington “think tanks” on the Palestinian issue. The American Enterprise Institute submitted a good proposal which we accepted and which produced useful information and insights. As a matter of fact, in 1979 after Camp David, we hired two of the AEI researchers to help design an election system for the West Bank and Gaza. I think the 1976 research and analysis period was a fruitful one for it not only expanded our knowledge, but

also developed new associations that measurably enhanced the capacity of the US government to deal with Palestinian issue when it came to the top of the agenda.

I might just elaborate a little on American-PLO contacts during the mid to late 1970s period. One primary example of such contacts was Landrum Bolling. I first met him in 1967 after the Middle East war when he was President of Earlham College. He was representing a Quaker group which was working on finding some solution to the Middle East problem. He wrote a little book Quest for Peace. That book gave Bolling a reputation for describing very objectively the views of the various parties. I don't remember him covering the Palestinians to any great degree because in the period immediately following the 1967 war, the UN passed Resolution 242 categorized the Palestinians as refugees. There was no vision then of a Palestinian nation; the PLO had not reached the degree of prominence that it later achieved. In any case, Bolling achieved a reputation for honesty and fairness and for presenting the views of all sides fairly. Bolling became the President of the Lilley Foundation, then the President of the Council of Foundations and still later he became the rector of the Ecumenical Center which can be found between Bethlehem and Jerusalem. That Center had been established by the Pope when he visited the area. Father Ted Hesburgh was very much involved in the foundation of the Center. Bolling was also involved in the U.S.-Soviet dialogue at the heart of the Cold War. As a Quaker, he was always involved in tensions among nations and people. In 1976, during the Presidential elections, he became one of candidate Carter's principal briefers on the Middle East. Carter had listed the Arab-Israeli problem as one of the five foreign policy issues that he wished to deal with if he became President. Early in 1977, Bolling, on his own, decided to contact the PLO to discuss its attitude toward participation in a peace process. Kissinger had committed to the Israelis, at the end of August 1975, that the US would not recognize or negotiate with the PLO until it accepted the existence of Israel as stipulated in UN Resolution 242. Bolling, as a private citizen, was entitled to talk to anyone he wished. On several occasions, he discussed with the PLO various formulae which would have met US requirements. At the same time—1977—the administration

was discussing the PLO issue with various Arab nations—Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria. In the summer, Secretary Vance gave to the Saudi Foreign Minister, in answer to the latter's question, a paragraph that represented what we believed the PLO would have to state publicly if they were to satisfy the word and spirit of the 1975 commitment. These diplomatic discussions were formal administration efforts to communicate to the Palestinians what we felt they needed to do if they wanted to participate with us in the peace process. All these efforts were a prelude to what we had hoped would be a resumption of the Geneva peace conference which we targeted for the end of 1977. So our dialogue through Arab capitals and Bolling's direct conversations with the PLO were running on parallel tracks. I think he would be the first to say that some of the formulations he brought back from his probes were no more revealing of Palestinian willingness to “bite the bullet”—i.e. an unequivalent response—than were the responses we obtained through the diplomatic channels.

That is an illustration of American-Palestinian dialogue during the period we are discussing. Bolling and I had maintained contacts from 1967 on. So I was aware of his activities, although most of his communications were with Carter through Brzezinski. This was not a secret channel; we were aware of Bolling's views. But I certainly did not commission his contacts nor do I believe that he was commissioned by anyone in the administration. Bolling reported to the White House what his program was and what he had heard, but I don't think he received any guidance from there.

There were other examples. There were some American scholars who occasionally met with Palestinians and the PLO and who would then let us know what they had heard. I don't think these contacts were stimulated by the administration, although undoubtedly US policy was explained to the scholars before their contacts. John Moroz, now the President of East-West Studies in New York, in 1981, developed relationships with some PLO people during the course of his studies. That was one of the reasons that I joined the Board of that organization in 1981.

It is important to note that all of these contacts were not in violation of our policy, which was that the US government would not have contact with the PLO, except on two issues: a) the safety of Americans, as in the evacuation from Beirut at the beginning of the civil war in 1975-76 and b) matters dealing with PLO representation and their rights under the US-UN agreement which required us to provide certain services to the UN missions. These concerns were handled by contacts at low levels in New York on .

After Camp David, we had to contact the PLO during the Iran hostage crisis. It is from them that we learned of the release of the 13 hostages at Thanksgiving 1979—so called "Women in Black" operation. The PLO had established close contacts with Khomeini in Paris by providing bodyguards to him in his exile. I informed the Israeli ambassador that we were communicating with the PLO during the hostage crisis, but I made it clear to him that these were within our guidelines since they dealt with the safety of Americans. After consultations with Jerusalem, he said to me: "You know our position on the PLO, but we don't want to complicate your life." I think that summarizes the extent of our contacts with the PLO during my years in the government. I never felt that any of the contacts of which I was aware were a violation of our stated policy. I should also note that the August commitment—Kissinger to Israel—was delivered in a note that had been watered down considerably from the original draft that had been prepared by the Israelis. Our commitment was not to recognize the PLO or to have any discussions with the PLO — except for the two matters I mentioned earlier—until that organization certain requirements were satisfied. I was authorized by Kissinger, and later by Vance, to say specifically during open Congressional hearings, that that agreement did not preclude conversations with the PLO on any subject. That did not sit well with all members of the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee, but I was able to point to the specific language in the Kissinger memorandum which specifically authorized conversations. The original Israeli draft was much more restrictive—it probably even prohibited us looking at a PLO member. Our position became more complicated early in the Carter administration when, in a pure mistake, the President said that we would not talk with the PLO. That went beyond the

1975 Kissinger statement to the Israelis. I think the President had just misunderstood what the 1975 agreement required of us. Then Carter realized, or his staff called to his attention, that he had tied his hands more than necessary. He later amended his first comment and said that we would talk to the PLO if they met the conditions outlined in the 1975 agreement. In fact, this second statement was in some respect an over-reaction because it suggested that we might even reach out to the PLO. It was against the background of that second statement that we undertook an active search to see whether the PLO would meet the requirements. Had it done so, we could have brought them into the peace process. But the PLO never responded; it could never muster the political will to issue an unequivocal statement until 1988.

Q: Let me return to the 1976 period and ask you what a an election year does to the diplomatic process of an issue may be too hot to handle?

SAUNDERS: Let me refer to Bill Quandt's book on Camp David. In the opening pages of that work, Bill outlines the political cycle that any administration goes through, although his focus was essentially on the Middle East. The first year is devoted to learning what maximum opportunities there might be for new initiatives; the second year, now based on more experience, provides some opportunity for new initiatives, but is limited by mid-year elections; the third year was ripe for new initiatives up to the time that the presidential elections started; by the fourth year, the inclination is to keep a steady course. The reasons for avoiding new initiatives in an election year are particularly acute for Middle East issues because this is an area which raises major domestic political anxieties, especially if you end up cross-wise with the government of Israel. This cycle is not by any means universal for every administration. In the last year of the Carter administration —1980—the autonomy talks were proceeding full speed under the leadership of Sol Linowitz. But I think Bill's generalization is valid. There are of course exceptions; if a President could have concluded a US-Soviet arms agreement in an election year that would have been seen in a favorable light by the electorate, that certainly would have been

a political benefit to the incumbent. But in the Middle East, the domestic political risks for an incumbent were just too great to expect much US involvement.

I should say that 1976 was not completely void of diplomatic activity in the Middle East; the US just couldn't tell the people of the region that it was taking a year off. We did undertake a fair number of holding actions and certainly kept a dialogue going.

Q: What else did you tackle as Director of INR?

SAUNDERS: I was introduced to a number of new issues. One of the major ones, which I followed closely for my whole tour as Director, was the question of the Soviet missile program. The intelligence community had varying assessments. Furthermore, it was during my period as Director that the “Team B” exercise was mounted—December 1976—and that created a continuing debate about Soviet intentions and capabilities. We had staff members in INR who were very much involved in disarmament issues, although I, not having much background in these issues, was not as personally involved as I was in Middle East matters, for example. INR, by charter, was charged with responsibility to participate in any estimates made of the arms balance and similar questions. I think the INR team on these subjects was strong and played a major role in the inter-agency deliberations. My staff was technically competent. The charge that the Department did not play as active role in disarmament issues as other institutions did may be accurate, but during my tour as Director, the Secretaries of State were Henry Kissinger and Cyrus Vance. There is no question that they were intimately involved in disarmament issues and on US-Soviet relations questions; often they were the deciding voice below the Presidents they served. Kissinger may not have used the State bureaucracy, but he was deeply involved through his back-channel relationships, perhaps to the discomfort of some. Vance, in his own way, had the same charter and role, but played it in a different way. Perhaps the State bureaucracy was not as engaged in disarmament issues as some other institutions, but no one can say that the Secretaries of State in the mid to late 1970s were not in a leadership position on these matters.

Another hot topic that we worked on was the Angola crisis, which, again, was a subset of the US-Soviet relationship. It became one of the major nails in the detente coffin. We got the sense that the Soviets were behaving in a manner inconsistent with the Brezhnev-Nixon communiqu# which stipulated that neither power would use conflicts in the Third World to gain political advantage over the other power. That made the Angola civil war an important event.

Another issue that complicated my life as Director of INR was raised by a domestic event. At the end of 1975 or the beginning of 1976, Senator Church and Congressman Pike and their committees released reports on the activities of the intelligence community. So I inherited from Bill Hyland the responsibility for State Department responses to issues that had not been addressed before Bill left. Included among those was the thorny question of “Executive Privilege”. Those reports and the aftermath were part of the reason that George Bush was appointed as Director of CIA. He had a mandate from President Ford to reorganize the intelligence community so that people could have some confidence in it again. All this happened during my watch as Director. I remember paying my first courtesy call on George Bush. He told me then what his mandate from the President was; he wondered how he could reorganize a complex organization of which he knew little. He created an “Intelligence Community” as a formal entity, complete with a staff to help the new Director to oversee all of the intelligence work done in the US government. That entity then put together a comprehensive budget for all elements of the community. So I spent a lot of time participating in this US government reorganization of the intelligence function. I think the Bush organizational formulations worked reasonably well. By the time the Carter administration came in, with Stan Turner, Harold Brown, Cy Vance and Warren Christopher, the question of resource allocations was pretty well resolved. The Carter administration officials, although having differences on substantive issues, spent very little time if any on the question who controlled intelligence community resources. Although the Director of CIA was nominally responsible for the use of resources in the broad “intelligence community”, most of them were under the control of different Cabinet officers.

The Ford idea to coordinate the various intelligence efforts was a good contribution to improving the effectiveness of our intelligence efforts.

Q: By 1975, you had been acquainted with US intelligence efforts for more than a decade. Did your view of those efforts from the vantage point as Director of INR give you any reasons to re-examine your views on the efficacy of those intelligence efforts? Were you surprised by anything when you became Director?

SAUNDERS: I don't think so. Most of the concerns I might have had with the US intelligence efforts would have been expressed while I was a member of the NSC staff. It is true that for the first time I became better acquainted with analyses and covert activities in other parts of the world outside of NEA. I had some knowledge of what was going on in the world because, with the NSC being the small staff that it was, it would have been very difficult not to have some sense of what was going on in areas for which I did not have immediate responsibility. Also, remember that my very first job in CIA was as junior staff assistant to the Deputy Director responsible for analysis. But we also served Allan Dulles, the Director of CIA and therefore acquired some knowledge about our covert and espionage activities throughout the world. So I did have some acquaintance of situations outside the Middle East. As Director of INR, I think I was adequately informed about situations and events that I was responsible for. I was very conscious in the 1976-78 period about the specific procedure required to obtain Presidential approval for covert operations. That procedure required the involvement of the Secretaries of State and Defense, the CIA Director and the NSC Advisor and their relevant staffs. Going back to the early 1960s, I remember George Mac Bundy, while he was commenting on some proposed action to interfere with an election in a foreign country saying that the US government would not engage in such activities any longer in Europe. There was a sense then that some activities were outside of acceptable norms. For many years, all covert action proposals had to be reviewed by a coordinating committee, which had different names under varying administrations. With the possible exception of one period —the Kissinger period—e.g. the Chile operation—, I think that a coordinating committee

reviewed all covert operations proposals, at least during my stint in government. During the Kissinger period, some activities were held very closely and known only by a very few people. During the Carter administration, there was absolutely no question about circumventing the law or taking any improper actions.

In the 1975-78 period, INR had a particularly close relationships with both Secretaries. As Director of INR, I tried to make the distinction between the bureaucracy and my own role. I tried to see myself in a personal advisory capacity to both Secretaries as well as the head of an organization. I did that by periodically writing personal memoranda to the Secretary on specific subjects. For example, I wrote them personal notes on the Middle East, China and other issues. Of course, I had had a close relationship with Kissinger from the NSC days. So I did write these personal memoranda which came from me and not from the “faceless bureaucracy”—a phrase that Kissinger used occasionally. These memoranda were in the first person providing the Secretary with my personal views on a specific subject. I suspect that these notes were received by both Secretaries differently from the more formal ones that I signed as Director of INR. Of course, I did not write all those personal memos myself; most of them were written by my colleagues, but they were drafted under my personal supervision in an effort to answer the questions that a Secretary of State might well have. I did, as I said, draw a distinction between my two roles, partially for tactical reasons because I thought that personal memoranda were more likely to capture the Secretary's attention. When the memos came back with Kissinger's scribbles all over them, I would share them with my co-authors. They began to understand that this personal channel was a good avenue to get views before the Secretary. I used this technique more with Kissinger than I did with Vance because of the complexity of Henry's personality. Cy was more open; the team surrounding him was more open, but I think I continued to send these personal memoranda to Vance, although probably not in the same numbers.

In 1975, the war in Lebanon broke out. One day Kissinger yelled at me wondering why no one seemed to be able to write something analytically about Lebanon. The problem was

that the situation in the country was very complex with alliances among various groups changing almost daily. I had two young staff members in INR who were well versed in Middle East affairs. One was a graduate of the American University of Beirut, who spoke Arab fluently. The other was a first tour Foreign Service officer who was very bright. So I worked with them and they produced, with the assistance of the regional bureau, a series of memoranda on Lebanon. When we first started this, we used to send the Secretary two memos per day; then later it became daily. That series continued through my tenure as Director and long after I left. These memoranda were again almost personal notes from me to the Secretary; we didn't get involved in the normal bureaucratic clearance process. The memos were so good that many of them were sent to the White House and the Secretary of Defense. It was the technique of using a personal device that was most effective.

Q: When you became Director of INR, you were asked to head a large organization —in State Department terms. What was your reaction when you first became Director to having to supervise these many people?

SAUNDERS: There were about 320 people in INR when I first came on board. I welcomed the opportunity to direct a large organization. I had some familiarity with the supervising function from my days in NEA, which although small in Washington, had responsibility for a large number of overseas missions. So I was not intimidated by my new responsibilities. I was most challenged by the opportunity to work with people who were very knowledgeable about areas that I knew little about. I was not concerned by the management responsibilities. I had a good executive office and a good principal deputy who had been in INR for a while and could take care of the day-to-day administrative chores.

I thought that the staff was quite good. I think they welcomed the opportunity to go to work on policy problems. Some of them were at first a little uncomfortable and reluctant, but the idea of being engaged with the Secretary and the policy process was rather attractive

to most of them. Morale in that Bureau—and I think it is probably true also for the Policy Planning staff—rises and falls depending on the relationship that the Directors have with the Secretaries. Absent that personal relationship, the staffs just churn out studies after studies with no sense at all that some one is paying any attention to the analyses. Given my relationship with Kissinger, I think the INR staff felt it was involved in the policy process. Furthermore, Kissinger always took Roy or myself with him wherever he went overseas because he was so heavily involved in Middle East diplomacy. He was always concerned—and rightly so—that something might arise while traveling; so he felt he needed some senior official along for such eventualities. When I became Director of INR and Roy became the Assistant Secretary for NEA, I was the one selected to go with the Secretary because Atherton had day-to-day responsibilities beyond just the Middle East. That gave the INR office responsible for the area that we were visiting an opportunity to make its views known and felt. That gave those offices a feeling of having a greater stake in determining US foreign policy.

Q: Is it fair to say that in the 1976-79 period, the day-to-day management of the Middle East peace process was left essentially to Sisco, Atherton, Bob Oakley, Pete Day and yourself?

SAUNDERS: Essentially, I think that is correct although I must emphasize that the day-to-day business was largely managed by NEA. In 1976 and 1977, as Director for INR, there were some matters for which I did not have a personal feel because they were managed by Roy. I knew what was going on and what the outcomes were, but I did not have the personal involvement that I had, for example, during the shuttles. I did go on all the trips, particularly after Vance became Secretary of State.

Q: Let me ask you about the role of Western Europe in Middle East affairs during the 1975-78 period. Was it active and useful?

SAUNDERS: Western European countries were not very heavily involved in the Middle East in those years. There was a period at the beginning of the Nixon administration when France particularly was very much engaged. That was partly due to de Gaulle's initiatives and Nixon's desire to cultivate him. Then we held the so called “Four Power” talks at the UN—France, Soviet Union, Great Britain and the US. That forum didn't produce much; it became essentially just another channel for US-Soviet discussions about the Middle East. By 1977, when Carter was inaugurated, the Middle East was essentially a US responsibility with occasional deference shown to the Soviet Union. Occasionally, some Western European country or group would issue some statement which would appear to be pro-Palestinian. We viewed those interventions as gratuitously troublesome because they were so unbalanced while we were trying to work with both sides. Pro-Palestinian statements without any concomitant effort or ability to move Israel didn't have any practical consequences; on the contrary, they just raised Israeli back-lashes which just further complicated our efforts. Of course, I have just given you a US perspective; I imagine that the Western Europeans might well thought that they were performing a useful function by paying attention to one party in the dispute which was being neglected by the US. I don't think we gave much consideration to the views of the Western Europeans unlike those of the Soviet Union. Kissinger would stop in Bonn or London on his way back from the Middle East to keep those governments informed, but it was more a courtesy in an effort to keep the Europeans at bay.

Q: Let us now move to 1977 which brought a new administration to the White House. Had you known Cyrus Vance before he became Secretary of State?

SAUNDERS: Not really well. I am sure that we attended meetings together when he was the Deputy Secretary of Defense in the 1960s. I had a role in staffing his Cyprus peace efforts in 1974, but I had never worked with or for him. When Vance was first appointed, I wondered whether he would continue my appointment as Director of INR. In 1981, the Reagan Administration did not continue my appointment. In 1967, I doubt that the INR

position was at the top of Vance's staffing priorities. I was probably among the last to learn that the Secretary wanted me to continue in his administration. I think the word got to me only close to Inauguration Day. I had not gotten any inkling during the transition about Vance's plans.

During the transition period, as Director, I had to go to brief Vance on some of our esoteric intelligence collection means. He had to sign a piece of paper indicating that he had been so briefed, although I suspect he knew most of what I had to tell him from his DoD days. But Vance had to go through the process again because it was so required by our security requirements. At the time of the briefing, we had a pleasant and brief exchange. I did what I had to do; he did what he had to do. I thought that this meeting would have been a marvelous opportunity for Vance to express an interest in my staying on. That did not happen then. I have always assumed that it was Phil Habib, who was to become the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, who put a good word on my behalf. Vance had known Habib from the Vietnam Peace talks. I think that the Department's leadership assumed that Roy Atherton would be at sometime be reassigned from the Assistant Secretary for NEA position leaving me as the sole remaining senior official who had been involved in the Middle East peace process. I guess that Habib also thought about the desirability of having me succeed Roy when the time would come. I remember going through a receiving line for Vance when he became Secretary. Habib was standing next to him. When it was my turn to shake the Secretary's hands, Habib leaned over and told him that I would be a good candidate to take over NEA when Roy would leave.

Three weeks after the Inauguration, Vance took his first trip to the Middle East. He took Roy and myself with him. So my future seemed to have been all mapped out except that no one had ever mentioned it to me directly. At one point, some one called me; I don't even remember who it was. I left a staff meeting and then returned to it to tell my staff that I would continue as INR Director. The whole process worked in its own mysterious way.

I had not known Warren Christopher before; he became the Deputy Secretary. I did know Habib well. This was my second transition—the first having occurred while I was at the NSC when Kissinger succeeded Rostow. I was the only staffer who was kept on at that time. I was anxious to go through these transitions just to see what operational difference it would make when one political party takes over power from the other. In the Kissinger/ Vance change in 1977, the greatest difference was in the personality of the two men. They had very different leadership styles. I was tremendously impressed by how well Vance was prepared when he became Secretary of State. The Middle East was bound to engage a President and a Secretary regardless of party; it was to be one of the major issues of their days. Under those circumstances, one would have guessed that Vance's trip would have required a tremendous amount of paper, briefings, meetings and preparations. In fact, Roy and I prepared one strategy memorandum for the transition team. We spent very little time with Vance thereafter before we took off to the Middle East. Vance moved in; he knew exactly where matters stood; he generally agreed with what we had suggested the next steps might be. There was hardly a shift in stride. I suspect that my colleagues who were working on Soviet affairs and arms control issues had a different experience. Vance did go to Moscow soon after the Inauguration where, I gather, some proposals were put forward that the Carter administration later regretted. That was not true for the Middle East. Vance was on top of all major issues. He had kept current through his membership on the Council for Foreign Relations and other foreign affairs conferences and study groups. The Kissinger shuttles and our 1975/76 strategies were an open book in the main. In his book, Vance recalls that after Carter's election, but before inauguration, he received a call from the President-elect. Carter wanted a memorandum outlining what his first term might look like in foreign policy. Vance listed five goals that Carter eventually adopted. One of those was the continuation of the Arab-Israeli peace process. So Vance was pretty much up to date about events in the Middle East and supported the general strategy that had been developed in the previous three years.

There was one substantial difference in the administration's approach to the Middle East. In the Nixon/Kissinger period, we emphasized a step-by-step approach to the resolution of the Middle East conflict. By the end of 1976, as I have mentioned, we knew that that approach, as exemplified by the shuttles, had probably run its course. I think even Kissinger recognized that. So Carter and Vance concentrated on resuming the comprehensive approach using Geneva as the locale for negotiations. That was the emphasis in early 1977. That decision reflected not only the fact that there just weren't many more interim steps that might be taken, but also that the Middle East would be one of Carter's top priorities.

Q: I gather from your comments that during the Kissinger period much of the Middle East tensions was viewed through the prism of the Cold War. Was that true also for the Carter/ Vance period?

SAUNDERS: No. Carter personally said to me that he saw the Middle East problem through human rights lenses. That is the theme that motivated our Middle East approach in the late 1970s. That meant that there would be greater emphasis on the recognition of the Palestinian dimension of the problem, without ignoring the human dimension of the Israeli position.

This major shift in emphasis in foreign policy from one administration to another made a tremendous difference. Because Carter saw the world through human rights lenses, he made a major effort to push the Israeli-Arab peace process forward. When the Reagan/ Haig team came into power, we returned to a foreign policy that viewed most foreign policy issues through a Cold War prism. Haig embarked on a process to achieve strategic consensus in the Middle East and put the Camp David process on the back-burner. Haig took a few brief moments to try to continue the Camp David process and he did oversee the ultimate Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai as stipulated in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. But essentially he viewed the Palestinians in Lebanon as having been drawn into the Soviet sphere; he saw the Syrians as proxies for the Soviets. I don't know what he told

Sharon when the issue of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon arose; I don't know that he gave Sharon a “green light” or an “amber light”; he certainly did not give him a “red light”. An administration's perspective of what drives events around the world makes a tremendous difference on specific foreign policy determinations. As far as I am concerned, I believe that the Camp David process, in its broad application, was shelved by the Reagan administration. If one looks at the historic handshake between Rabin and Arafat that took place on the White House lawn in September 1993, one might well wonder whether, if Reagan had used his large electoral mandate in 1981, the Middle East process might not have been pushed more vigorously to a conclusion thereby making a considerable difference to the events of the following twelve years.

I would observe that this fundamental change in the view of the world between Nixon/ Kissinger and Carter/Haig made a difference in other parts of the world. For example, there was a great increase in our efforts to achieve some stability in Southern Africa. Carter did say, in December 1981, after he left office, that when he began his Presidency, he tried to move forward our relationships with China, the arms control relationships with the Soviet Union, the Middle East peace process in addition to the Southern African peace process. He did emphasize his ability to push through a Panama Canal treaty. So Carter saw himself as having continued the best policies of his predecessors and having intensified US efforts in some areas. He did seem to believe that the Reagan team was in fact trying to reverse the emphasis that he had placed in the foreign policy areas that he had pushed. So the prism through which a President sees the world makes a lot of difference in policy development and implementation.

This difference in basic philosophy makes a difference to the workings of a bureaucracy. For example, in INR, after Carter's elections, we funded through our external research budget, a conference on “Morality in Foreign Policy”. Ken Thompson of the University of Virginia was the conference leader. The questions that the Carter senior officials posed to the INR analysts were considerably different from those posed by the Kissinger team. That was true even for an area like the Middle East. The questions there were more concerned

with the Palestinian dimensions; fortunately, because of the work we had done on that subject in 1976, we were well prepared to answer those questions.

Q: Did your role as Director of INR change after Cyrus Vance became Secretary?

SAUNDERS: First of all, I did not have the personal relationship with Vance that I had with Kissinger when the latter became Secretary. On the other hand, Vance made me immediately a member of his Middle East team. As I mentioned, within three weeks of the Inauguration, I was on the plane with Vance and Roy off to the Middle East. That enabled me to establish very early in his administration a working relation-ship with the Secretary. In addition, the transition team, which was led by Vance, was a very professional group, unlike the one that the Reagan administration put together. The Carter transition team consisted of a lot of people who understood the Department and were experts in their fields. Many of them later became assistant secretaries in the Department. Some members of the team came to INR and we held a very substantive briefing and discussion with them. Originally the transition team had the idea that INR might be broken up with the geographic experts moved to the regional bureaus and the functional experts to the functional bureaus. My general view was that there were many advantages to having a group of people divorced from the day-to-day policy work and therefore I did not think the idea was a very good one. Nevertheless, the transition team pushed very hard for the abolition of INR. It was on the Middle East trip that I had my first opportunity to present my views to Vance; he accepted the validity of my position and confirmed that INR would remain as a separate bureau.

Vance made his first overseas trip to the Middle East because the Arab-Israeli conflict was very high on Carter's foreign policy agenda. As I said earlier, progress on the peace process, if not a settlement of the conflict, was one of the five goals that Carter had established for his first term as President. Furthermore, there had been a semi-hiatus in US involvement in the Middle East for about a year. Vance felt that if the US were to get back into the ball-game, it would have to do it quickly. He himself was

personally committed to trying to move the peace process forward; it was just not only an administration goal. It was not a subject which needed a lot of preparation. All the ingredients for a US initiative were more or less readily available. So that the trip, although taken very early in the administration's tenure, was very substantive; it was not merely a fact-finding, shaking hands, get acquainted trip.

For example, when we went to Syria, we did the customary things: airport arrival ceremony, trip to the guest house, lunch with the Foreign Minister. The Foreign Minister would go off to another room and brief President Assad. He would return and tell us that the President was ready to receive us. I can remember Khaddam, the Syrian Foreign Minister, whom we knew from the Kissinger shuttles, indicating some surprise by Vance's very substantive comments. He had only expected that this trip was a courtesy call. Once Vance had begun his presentation, the Foreign Minister seemed to notice that this meeting was more than that; he reached for a pad of paper and began to make notes. Ultimately, even though this was one of the first stops, Khaddam advised us to use another word besides “mandate” for an interim West Bank governmental structure. That word was too reminiscent of the term used by the British when they ruled that part of the world. So we actually engaged in serious, substantive discussions right from the beginning.

As I mentioned earlier, we used the same check-list procedure that we had developed for the Kissinger shuttles. Roy and I discussed what we could do to help Secretary Vance; we were somewhat in the dark because we had not had the opportunity for any extensive, repetitive preparatory meetings that usually precede Secretarial trips. So we agreed that we would use the same process that we had used for Kissinger. Vance accepted that probably because he thought that was the way we always had operated and because it seemed to have worked pretty well. I remember Roy and I saying to each other that although Vance didn't seem to know what he wanted, we did give him something that he could use and that met his needs. So the check-list process was continued. I don't mention this with any negative connotation; I have the greatest respect and affection for Cyrus Vance; he is a great man. But Roy and I just used something that had worked for us

previously, although it never became the elaborate mechanism that had been developed during the Kissinger shuttles, partially because the Vance visits to the Middle East were really not shuttles, as they had been defined during the Kissinger period. Vance's trips were less frenetic, but they moved the peace process forward. I think on that first trip Roy and I were the senior advisors; on later trips Bill Quandt, representing the NSC, joined us —I don't recall him making that first trip because I don't believe he had joined the NSC yet. Bill became a full member of the team; Vance was not the kind of person who would have indulged in petty bureaucracy. He welcomed Bill as soon as he joined the NSC. I knew Bill well because we had worked together for many years, starting during the 1973 war; Roy and I liked him very much and had great respect for him. So Bill Quandt was a full fledged member of the Middle East team right from the beginning of his NSC tour, welcomed by everybody, including Vance.

Habib did not join us on the first trip, as Sisco had when he was Under Secretary for Political Affairs. Habib did not go to the Middle East until the Fall of 1977, when he joined Vance on one of his trips. Phil had told me once that when he had joined the Foreign Service he had made a deliberate decision that he would concentrate on East Asia and stay away from Middle East issues because of his Lebanese heritage. But he did go with us on a couple of occasions; one time was when we went shortly after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. Shortly after that, the day Begin visited Washington, Phil had a massive heart attack.

Q: Did anyone on that first trip with Vance foresee a "Camp David"?

SAUNDERS: No. What we did see was a renewal of a peace process that would culminate in a comprehensive conference—comprehensive because all the parties involved in the dispute would attend and because it would focus on resolving all the outstanding issues that were barrier to a final peace. The avenue for this comprehensive approach was the Geneva Middle East Peace Conference. There wasn't much more of the Sinai you could split in an interim agreement; that would have required as much expenditure of

energy as a final agreement would have required. The Golan Heights had been split to the nth degree by the interim agreement of May 1974. The West Bank was unresolved and required special attention; that subject could not be tackled because it required the participation of the PLO and that was only possible in a larger context. So I believe that had Ford been re-elected and if Kissinger had remained as Secretary of State, we would also have striven for a larger negotiation process.

In 1977 we concentrated on developing terms of reference, substantive objectives and an organizational structure for comprehensive peace negotiations. All these efforts raised major issues. Sadat finally became so frustrated with the slow pace of the diplomatic track that he took it upon himself to accelerate the pace by going to Jerusalem in November 1977. I think it is fair to say that if we hadn't pressed for a Geneva conference, Sadat may never have gone to Jerusalem. We used his trip to Jerusalem as a spring-board to push all parties to go to Geneva. In the Spring of 1978, Roy Atherton was in the Middle East trying to use Sadat's initiative to formulate a set of principles that would move all the parties toward Geneva. In fact, because of the situation on the ground, we began to focus on an Egyptian-Israeli peace process rather than an area-wide comprehensive process. By July 1978, it appeared that the Sadat initiative might come to nought.

In the face of that prospect, Vance chaired a meeting of Egyptian and Israeli officials at Leeds Castle at the end of July. It was a very good meeting, although it has never received much public attention. We didn't have any concrete objectives in mind; we were merely trying to take stock. We did have the Atherton principles, which appeared to have general acceptance, but were not motivating the parties to make further progress. Our objectives for the Leeds Castle meeting was essentially for the Egyptian and Israeli officials to become acquainted so that they could see each other as human beings and not as intransigent representatives of intransigent governments. The Castle was surrounded by a moat; that was both a fact and a symbol.

We were originally going to meet at the Churchill Hotel in London, but just before the meeting was to begin, a Palestinian had been shot near the hotel. So the British, for security reasons, refused to let us use the hotel and put us in the Castle where they could better protect the delegates. Approximately twelve years later, I went back with my wife and daughter; that was an interesting experience. Originally, we had planned to have the Egyptian and Israeli delegations eat in separate dining rooms; we would spread ourselves among the other two. But then Mrs. Vance suggested that that was not really appropriate and that a greater mixture was really in order. So we all ate in one dining room and that was very helpful in breaking down barriers. We all sat at a long table and we would sit in different places at every meal; it turned out to be no big deal and worked very well. The Vances are so gracious and charming that they set the tone; I don't think they saw anything insidious or devious about it. In fact, especially since Sadat's trip, they saw it as perfectly normal that people attending the same conference would share their meals together. I think both the Egyptians and the Israeli were in fact ready for this greater congenially.

It was a very good meeting, with very substantive discussions. No one went there for the purpose of achieving an end result; we went to Leeds to take stock. So the discussions were wide ranging. I remember someone asking Dayan what the Israelis really wanted from a final West Bank settlement. He said that all the Israelis wanted was access to the Holy sites. Then we got to the question of whether an Israeli should be allowed to purchase a house in Hebron. Dayan said that if he could buy a house in West Virginia, then he should be able to buy one in Hebron. I have never figured out why he chose West Virginia; it was almost bizarre. Of course, that exchange led to the next question which was whether a Palestinian could buy a house or lease a condominium in Haifa. That is an illustration of the wide ranging discussions that took place. Leeds was an opportunity for both the Israelis and the Egyptians to wonder “what if”. It gave them to talk about problems without being under pressure to reach any settlement.The Leeds Castle meeting agreed that the Foreign Ministers should meet at the American surveillance site in the

Sinai passages. It occurred to me at the time that is such a meeting were to be held, it had to conclude with some significant agreements. Using Roy's principles and the Leeds discussions as a guide, I sat down, when we returned to London, to draft a tentative agreement that the Foreign Ministers could sign. That draft, after many reiterations, actually became the first draft of the Camp David accords. But even at Leeds Castle, we were not thinking of a heads- of-state meeting; we were much more modest. But in August, it was President Carter who suggested that his Israeli and Egyptian counter-parts be invited to Camp David.

I have often said, when asked to discuss the Camp David negotiations, that you can't talk about that single event without talking about the four year long peace process that preceded it. I certainly believe that personal relationships developed further during the Leeds Castle although some from both sides had met before in more formal settings. Those relationships contributed to the capacity of people to think together and to talk together in imaginative and constructive ways. You would probably not have had a Camp David success had there not been earlier dialogues. Kissinger always made it a point, at the start of every meeting during the shuttles, to describe for his interlocutors what the views, personalities and the interests of each member of the other side's negotiating team were. When people ask me what the shuttles accomplished, I always mention that each side began to know their counterparts on the other side without having ever met them. Sadat could make a proposal and based on his briefings from Kissinger would know that Dayan might find it hard to accept, but that another member of the Israeli team might well like it. And that was true for the Israelis. Of course, the Egyptian and Israeli teams met when Sadat went to Jerusalem and thereafter met occasionally. That led to Leeds Castle and beyond that, to Camp David. By the time they met at Camp David, the Israelis and the Egyptians were sufficiently accustomed to each other that it was not novel for them to work together.

I believe that it is a very important part of any negotiations to know the person on the other side of the table. It goes far beyond just knowing the potential reactions to a specific

proposal. When people don't know each other, they tend to dehumanize the “enemy” and almost demonize him. The first positive benefit of the ever increasing personal contacts was that people came to respect each other. They didn't have to like the other; they didn't have to agree with the other, but each Israeli and Egyptian began to see that their counterparts were serious individuals, with ability, and with some valid point of view—at least valid within a given frame of mind. Furthermore both sides began to see that the other was not always necessarily threatening. I believe that it was that humanization process that permitted the two sides to recognize that each had certain needs and interests that would have to be met if there were to be any kind of peaceful relationship established. Once that basic premise was accepted, it permitted both sides to approach problems that affected both. These were problems that could only be solved by both sides working together. That required accommodations by both sides; that process became easier as both sides agreed that they needed to have a peaceful relationship. In order to get to that level of acceptance, both sides had to see each other as humans with valid needs and claims. They each had to feel what the other was saying; they, not any one else, had to be expected to see the world through someone else's eyes. You have to feel that the other person has a legitimate point of view that demands some positive response from you even if you don't agree with it. You have somehow to feel the intensity which underlies that other point of view and respect the sincere spirit in which it is offered. You have to accept that a view is so real that you have to come to terms with it, if you are to make any progress on your agenda. You don't have to accept the other point of view as correct, but you do have to acknowledge that the other person posits those claims and needs as strongly as I postulate my own. It can not be dismissed as just rhetoric—an Israeli phrase used to characterize some of Nasser's speeches—; it can not be ignored, but must be dealt with.

Q: In June 1973, you had attended a secret meeting between Kissinger and the Egyptians. What was that all about?

SAUNDERS: That was the second of Kissinger's secret meetings with the Egyptians. The first took place in Mount Kisco, Westchester County, New York. That took place in February 1973. Some people feel that Kissinger's hesitation to engage intensively behind the scenes in an Israeli- Egyptian dialogue brought Sadat to the conclusion that the Americans were not ready to play a major role in the peace process. That point of view also believes that this was one of the factors that forced Sadat to enter into a military engagement because he saw no alternatives. Roy, Peter Rodman and I were the only Americans at those meetings.

Q: Let me now ask you about any personal involvement that you may remember in the Us-Lebanon relations as well as the US-Syria ones.

SAUNDERS: I found Lebanon probably the most perplexing problem that I had to deal with. That may sound strange given all the other issues in which I was involved, but it was very difficult to devise a policy in Washington for a country which was essentially tearing itself apart. The smartest action we took probably was to assign John Dean to Beirut as our Ambassador. We in fact turned him loose. He interpreted his instructions to mean that the internal Lebanon problems were to be kept sufficiently under control so not to undermine the Arab-Israel peace process. He essentially moved from faction to faction trying to bring them into some sort of peaceful coexistence. It was essentially personal diplomacy, which was entirely appropriate. We had no way, except perhaps on a specific issue, to develop an overall policy because the factions kept shifting sides depending on the issue. That was very frustrating. The person on my staff who knew the problem better than anyone else in the Department was Maury Draper. He was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for that region. The civil war in that country started in 1975. I never figured out what we could have done about resolving that problem. We spent enough time on the issue. The office director was a good man. The embassy worked well. But I could never figure out how the United States might prevent a country from falling apart when its citizens were bent on self-destruction. Perhaps there was not anything we could do. In

any case, Lebanon was not an issue that lacked attention; it was a problem that was not soluble by an outside power. I don't think we could have changed the course of events in that country. I think we performed adequately on that matter; we just couldn't figure out how we could be more helpful.

As far as Syria was concerned, my deepest personal involvement occurred during the efforts to conclude a Syria-Israel disengagement agreement. I added up for Kissinger that up to the Fall 1974, we had spent 130 hours with Assad. That was an unprecedented amount of time to spend with a head of state on a specific issue. Assad was unique; he was a very interesting personality. We would have to remind ourselves periodically that Assad had been called the “Butcher of Hama” because in the meetings we had with him, he was very engaging. He had a very earthy sense of humor, to which Kissinger played. He laughed easily with a twinkle in eyes. Many of the jokes he really enjoyed dealt with Kissinger's stabs at Abdul Halim Khaddam, whom I mentioned earlier and who is still active today. Kissinger would say that he was trying to arrange a blind date for Khaddam with Golda Maier, which Assad found very funny. That simple kind of humor caught the fancy of both Assad and Kissinger; it was not malicious and Assad loved it. Assad was very intelligent and loved to bargain. He had a bazaar mentality extraordinaire. You will recall that I mentioned that the shuttle lasted 35 days. It included 26 round trips between Ben Gurion airport and Damascus International. That meant 26 meetings with Assad. Most of those meetings averaged six hours.

The pattern was to have a meeting in Jerusalem in the morning, rush to Ben Gurion airport, fly to Damascus arriving just before lunch or perhaps, on good days, just right after. I say “good days” because the lunch in Damascus was the same day in, day out. Upon arrival we would go to the guest house and brief Khaddam for about an hour. He would then brief Assad. Then we would be told that the President was ready to receive us and we would go to his conference room where he and two or three of his advisors would meet us (usually Khaddam and a senior Syrian foreign service officer and an interpreter). We also had an interpreter and Joe Sisco, Roy Atherton, Tom Scotes (the head of our

Interest Section in Damascus) and me. Whenever Kissinger would carry an important message from the Israelis, Assad would ask one or two of his military leaders to join us. Then a broader section of his inner circle could hear the message directly from Kissinger. He did that to enhance his policy making mechanism. We would meet for three or three and a half hours, adjourn for dinner in his office—catered by the same hotel that provided us lunch, so that lunch and dinner were frequently the same. At about 7:30 p.m., we would leave for the airport, fly back to Jerusalem, meet late that evening with the Israelis. We did not have many opportunities to escape the process. After about a month, Kissinger drafted a public statement which declared that the shuttle would be broken off. A few days later, as we were leaving Assad's office after again having failed to reach agreement, Assad called him back and said that perhaps agreement could be reached. There was a lot of brinkmanship in that Israel-Syria shuttle. When the agreement was nailed down, as Kissinger was leaving for the last time, he said to Assad: “You know, Mr. President, I have seen people who would walk to a brink, look over and step back. I have even seen a few people who would put one foot over the ledge and then step back. But I have never seen anyone who would walk up to the brink, put both feet over and hope that there would be a branch which he might grab on the way down.”

Assad paid a lot of attention to the Israeli press. That was facilitated by Khaddam's staff. They read carefully how various senior Israeli officials depicted the negotiations. From time to time, they would complain to us on some spin that the Israelis might have given a situation.

The first disengagement was with Egypt in January 1974; Syria was May 1974. In the summer and into the fall 1974 we were considering the possibility of trying to conclude a Jordan-Israel disengagement agreement which would have concluded the series with all of Israel bordering antagonists. That plan was aborted. By early 1975, we turned our attention to a second Israel-Egypt agreement; we wanted to keep up the peace process momentum. Assad opposed that. One day, he explained, very straight forwardly to Kissinger, why, as the President of Syria, he would not find such a second agreement in

Syria's interest. He was basically interested in maintaining a united Arab front; he could not countenance Egypt going off by itself. He believed that if Egypt and Jordan had their territories returned, no one would pay any attention to Syria. No one could care less if the Golan Heights were ever returned. He said to Kissinger: “Therefore I disagree profoundly with what you have planned (going back to the Egyptians), but I don't want that to effect our relationship.” I thought that was a very statesman-like comment. That was just one example of how direct and straight forward Assad could be. He just stated his views honestly, without acrimony. During negotiations, he would explore all possibilities, but never showed his hand until the end of the process.

Q: Let me now turn to non Middle East issues that were being discussed during your tenure as Director of INR. What were some of the hot subjects?

SAUNDERS: First of all, we continued our work on US-Soviet arms control agreements. That was a big issue for the Carter administration. We also worked on China and Africa matters. I am sure that there were others issues that we studied, but there were not in the same category as those I have mentioned.

Q: Let me ask you to compare the policy development process as you experienced it under Kissinger with that which was used during the Vance era.

SAUNDERS: The Vance process, as I said before, was much more open. The Kissinger analytical process, especially as I noticed it from my NSC vantage point, was very vigorous. After 1969, people say that Kissinger used the process to keep the bureaucracy busy, while he undertook his own initiatives like Vietnam and the relationships with the Soviet Union. The policy making process during the early Vance period was good. But I did not have the same opportunity to observe it from INR as I had in the NSC. I did not, for example, go to White House meetings in the Vance regime because my responsibilities were global. Secretary Vance tended to take the regional experts with him to the White

House meetings. We would participate in the preparation of analytical memoranda prior to the meetings, but then would not be directly involved in the policy process thereafter.

Of course, that changed radically when I became an assistant secretary. Then I was at White House meetings all the time. The Carter administration continued the three tier NSC process with the regional assistant secretary chairing a working group which was responsible for the analysis of a particular issue and the laying out all reasonable options. The second tier group was chaired by a Cabinet or sub-Cabinet officer; it often met in the situation room on the White House. This was the first level at which political factors were injected into the analysis. I always felt that it was at this stage that the options began to take some shape; that is they began to become significant in light of such matters as the President's campaign promises, the Congressional attitudes, the domestic political concerns, etc. The final tier was the National Security Council, chaired by the President. The decisions there were, of course, the President's, but the NSC group helped him by providing him with their views and feelings. Sometimes, the President made his decisions at the end of an NSC meeting; sometimes, he took the matter back to his office to give it further thought. There was not much organizational change in this three level process from the Ford administration to Carter's. The names of the various groups changed, but the process essentially was the same.

Q: How did your appointment to Assistant Secretary for NEA come about? You mentioned earlier that Phil Habib apparently had that in mind from the beginning of Vance's tenure, but I would like to know a little more precisely what led up to your appointment.

SAUNDERS: Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 was followed by a series of conversations among the three countries—Egypt, Israel and the US—which went on into early 1978. Roy Atherton was asked to concentrate on the Middle East process in an effort to establish a set of principles that Egypt and Israel might agree on. It was hoped that Roy's efforts could lead either to a resumption of the Geneva conference or at least to an Israel-Egypt agreement of some kind. So Roy began to spend a lot of time in the area itself

and Vance decided that that was the best use of Roy's talents at that time. He therefore appointed Roy as a full time negotiator, with the title of Ambassador-at-Large, and asked me to take over Roy's position as Assistant Secretary. That is the way Habib had foreseen the sequence of events a couple of years earlier. So on April 11, 1978, I became the Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asia Affairs. I immediately made it clear to everybody that any support that Roy required was to be provided without further adieu; I did not have to be asked for permission. By his time, Roy and I had worked together for so long that this combination was a natural. So the Middle East team became Roy, Bill Quandt and myself and our staffs. Habib unfortunately had to drop out for an extended period after his heart attack that came at the end of 1977.

After we came back from Leeds Castle, Carter sent Roy, Bill and me to the Middle East with the invitations to the Camp David meeting. Then we started the preparations for Camp David using the draft paper prepared at Leeds Castle, which I described earlier. Vance, Roy, Bill and I met at the Harriman estate to prepare for Camp David. At Camp David, it was Roy, Bill, our two Ambassadors—Hermann Eilts and Sam Lewis—and myself that made up the professional staff.

I should mention the role of the Israeli and Egyptian Ambassadors in Washington in the peace process. The Israeli Ambassador was used by Kissinger as almost another back-channel communications link, as he had used Dobrynin. During the shuttles period, Kissinger used the Israeli ambassador as an informal sounding board holding many informal conversations with him. He didn't use the Egyptian ambassador nearly as much. In large part that was due the need for the administration to maintain its Jewish political base in the United States which required at least the perception of not being at odds with Israel. Also our primary goal during the shuttle negotiations was to get the Israelis to be more accommodating; that meant that more dialogue was required with them than was the case of the Egyptians. We always faced the major question of how a step forward by Israel was politically possible both for them and for us.

Kissinger's exchanges with Sadat took place primarily through Hermann Eilts in Cairo. I suspect that Kissinger felt that the Israeli Ambassador in Washington was much more attuned to the political realities and currents in his country than the Egyptian Ambassador was about what was going on in Cairo. Kissinger also had tremendous confidence in Eilts and furthermore there was continuity there. In Israel, between 1973 and 1977, we had three Ambassadors. Sam Lewis was new in 1977, but then he stayed in Tel Aviv until 1985. There were great advantages to us to have face-to-face meetings between Sadat and Eilts. So, both for tactical and personality reasons, Kissinger dealt differently with the Egyptians than he did with the Israelis.

After Frank Malloy was assassinated in Lebanon, I remember sitting in on the last meeting that Dean Brown, our new Ambassador to Lebanon, had with Kissinger before his departure for Beirut. I remember Kissinger saying to Brown that he was sending him to Beirut because he knew how Brown's mind worked and therefore would understand the reports from Beirut. That episode re-emphasized in my mind the importance that Kissinger placed on his relations with some one else; the importance of that factor led Kissinger to recommend Brown to the President for the very delicate post as US Ambassador to Lebanon. So personal relations were very important to Kissinger. In the case of Eilts, he knew that Hermann was very meticulous and he understood what Kissinger was trying to do; furthermore Eilts had excellent rapport with Sadat. It could be that he did not have the same confidence in the series of American ambassadors in Tel Aviv. I think he just felt more comfortable communicating to that complex political body called the Israeli government through their representative in Washington. The difference in approach to the two governments may have stemmed from the wishes of the two governments themselves; it could have been that Sadat had indicated a preference for working through Eilts, whom he could communicate with face-to-face rather than over impersonal telegrams. It is these very subtle feelings that led Kissinger to handle his relationships with the Egyptians differently than he did from those he had with the Israelis. I don't want to imply that the Egyptian ambassador was not an outstanding envoy; he was!

He was very good in Washington; he kept close contact with the Congress and was very supportive of the peace process. He was highly respected and effective. We just had a different way of dealing with the two governments.

Q: We are now approaching the Camp David era. I recognize that this event has been fully documents and I am not going to go over ground that has already been fully plowed. Just briefly, as a stage setter, I would like to ask for the genesis of the Camp David meeting and the various events that led up to that historic session.

SAUNDERS: To set the Camp David context, I have to refer to events most of which I have already described at some length. First came the years of the peace process that started after the 1973 war. Then came the advent of the Carter administration when our Middle East policy took a radical turn away from the step-by-step diplomacy, as exemplified by the Kissinger shuttles, and the return to a comprehensive peace process, that had been started at Geneva. The first nine months of the Carter administration were devoted to trying to draw some terms of reference for another Middle East conference. Towards the end of this period, Sadat became frustrated by the slowness of our approach and its extreme legalist framework. He came to the conclusion that he had to break things loose. Hence his visit to Jerusalem, which was essentially was his idea—we were not party to that decision. Then came efforts in the following few months to use the Sadat initiative as an impetus to a Geneva conference. Then came the focus on the possibility of an Egyptian-Israeli peace accord. That brought Roy to the Middle East frequently in the first half of 1978 where he tried to capture the elements of a possible peace treaty. Roy made steady progress, but it was slow going. At the end of July, the Leeds Castle meeting took place, primarily to take stock of the situation and to glean possibilities for further movement. That conference gave rise to the idea of a Foreign Ministers' meeting to take place within the next to or three months. Carter took that idea and turned it into a meeting of Chiefs of State at Camp David.

We went to the Middle East in August with the invitations, which were very closely held. Vance met alone first with Begin and then with Sadat. Both reacted very favorably, which led a public announcement of the Camp David meeting. That was done less than four weeks before the event was scheduled to take place. Then the US delegation had a planning meeting at the Harriman estate shortly after our return from the Middle East. During August and early September, as you can well imagine, we were fully consumed by the upcoming Camp David event. One of my deputies went to Camp David to work out all the logistics; he looked at the site to try to determine the best location for the delegations, the site for the plenary sessions, the site for the smaller meetings, etc. Vance wanted to know if there was a round table available; there wasn't and the Navy was tasked to build one. That was put in one of the conference rooms. At the same time, we were busily engaged in addressing the substantive issues and trying to determine what we could strive for. CIA prepared psychological profiles on all the participants. As you can well imagine, it was a very busy few weeks, which frequently engaged the White House and the President personally.

The Camp David Accords were hammered out in the few historic days we had on site. We left Camp David on a Sunday morning; the Accords were signed at the White House that evening. A report to Congress was prepared and so on. There were some misunderstandings which arose out of the Camp David meeting that had to be rectified. A few weeks later, very large Egyptian and Israeli teams returned to Washington to negotiate the peace treaty. That round of negotiations initially started at Blair House, but then moved to the Madison Hotel, where the two delegations were housed. That round therefore became known as “Camp Madison”. Approximately in February 1979, because this peace treaty negotiation was moving so slowly, Vance met with the Egyptian and Israeli Foreign Ministers at Camp David. We went there for a weekend; the weather was terrible and all the people from the sunny Mediterranean climates had a horrible time with the snow and ice. The meeting did not go well; not many people know about that and I think that session is best buried. In any case, it was a bad period for me personally because this was the

time when Spike Dubs was assassinated and our Embassy in Tehran was seized for the first time.

Q: In 1978, what were the major factors that limited you and what were the factors that enable the parties to go beyond what seemed possible?

SAUNDERS: As I mentioned earlier, the first was, of course, that President Carter had placed the Middle East high on his foreign policy initiatives agenda. Secondly, the two principal powers were obviously coming to the conclusion that a partnership was better than war. The centerpiece of this new strategy was Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, but there were other signs as well. Those indicators gave rise to a Carter sense of obligation to Sadat, who had taken an extraordinary and very courageous step. I think that Carter suggested Camp David because he felt that he owed Sadat some public recognition; his initiative—Camp David—was a recognition of Sadat's initiative—Jerusalem. The changing dynamics in the Middle East at this time were palpable and a significant spur.

1978 was early in the Carter administration. His emphasis on human rights was well recognized by this time. His approach to the Middle East was totally consistent with his human rights policy. There was no domestic political pressure to get something done in the Middle East, but once Carter began to work on the issue, he had considerable support. That support enabled the administration to be far reaching in its vision. I think it is probably fair to say that, for example, in the US-Soviet context, after the first stumbles, there was enough progress on arms control to satisfy domestic demands. That lasted until mid-1979 when the Soviet inserted a brigade in Cuba and the SALT Treaty negotiations were going nowhere.

The Soviet role in the Middle East has been very strange. They backed away from supporting the Kissinger shuttles in part because they thought that we would fail after which they could up the pieces as they wished. That didn't happen. The Soviet policy in the Middle East was then confused. Kissinger gave lip-service to their role; he consulted

with them and then went ahead and did exactly whatever he wanted. Kissinger told the Soviets about as much as The New York Times might have told them. They accepted the situation, partly I assume, because they didn't know how to respond. When Carter became President, efforts were made to re-start the Geneva Peace Conference. Slowly people began to realize that the Soviets were the co-chair of that conference, as established in 1973. That meant that a dialogue with the Soviets had to be undertaken and in fact that happened during the UN General Assembly meeting in 1977 when Vance and Gromyko met—as had been the custom for Foreign Minister and Secretary of State for many years. A joint statement was issued after the meeting which indicated agreement between the two powers to co-chair a Geneva conference. Some people say that that scared Sadat into going to Jerusalem; I am not so sure of that cause and effect. It was certainly true that the Israelis reacted negatively followed by Egyptian concerns because they thought we were being too hasty in bringing the Soviets back into the picture. As far as US-Soviet relationships were concerned, at least we bought some time through the New York meeting. Then Sadat went to Jerusalem and that was the end of the Geneva initiative. The Soviets were never involved thereafter and were never a major consideration in the development of our Middle East strategy and tactics.

There are some who believe that there was a linkage between events in the Middle East and the relaxation of East-West tensions. There may have been such a linkage in Carter's and Vance's minds, but I could never see it. Vance made his trip to Moscow which took its toll; it took a while for Vance to recover from it because of some of the Soviet proposals. Vance went to the Middle East almost immediately after Inauguration in February 1977. From then until the end of September, we were working on terms of reference for the resumption of the Geneva conference, which, as I said, was to be co-chaired by the Soviets. During this period, we did not exchange many views on the Middle East with the Soviets. I also don't think that the relaxation of tensions with the Soviets had any impact on domestic pressures on the Middle East. At the beginning of October, Vance and Gromyko issued a statement at the UN which really caused a fire storm. The Israelis objected to

the statement. It was the dynamics of the Israeli reactions to our dialogue with the Soviets that created constraints on our policy flexibility. When the Israelis voice their displeasure, Carter had a mess on his hands for a period of time. He did not get any credit for his efforts on arms control when the discussion turned to the Middle East. The people who were interested in arms control were not necessarily the same ones that were interested in the Arab-Israeli situation; therefore, progress in one area had no linkage to the other. Even if some were interested in both issues, they would not have supported the administration after the Israelis voiced their unhappiness.

The Western European were happy to leave the Middle East in our hands. Camp David was such an unique event that it did not leave any room for European involvement. Later, no one could argue with the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty; so the Western Europeans were primarily spectators of the peace process. So in general, in the period 1977-79, there were no major outside impediments which interfered with our efforts. Impediments did appear after the signing of the peace treaty in March, 1979. The Camp David Accords provided first for the completion of an Egypt-Israel peace treaty within a given time frame (that time frame was exceeded, but the peace treaty was eventually signed and ratified). The second item coming out of Camp David were the autonomy talks for the people of the West Bank and the Gaza strip. Those talk began in the Spring 1979. For a number of domestic reasons and perhaps others as well, Carter and his advisors decided that the President could no longer continue to play the pre-eminent and absorbing role as he had done during Camp David and the peace treaty. In both of those processes, he was the senior mediator. By Spring 1979, Carter just had to devote much more of his time to running the United States government.

Having reached that conclusion, the administration fell back on a series of Middle East advisors. First was Bob Strauss, who in the Fall left that post to run Carter's reelection campaign; he was followed by Sol Linowitz. In fact, the Spring of 1979 was the beginning of the Presidential election campaign, including the Kennedy primary challenge. It was these domestic political considerations that began to form constraints on US policy and the

opportunity by the highest level of our government to focus on Middle East issues. It was a perfect illustration of the political cycle that each Presidency takes, as described by Bill Quandt. But the period from the beginning of the Carter administration to the Spring 1979, the US government had almost complete freedom to pursue its objectives in the Middle East, unfettered by any outside influences. One might even say that Carter had a relative free hand on foreign policy in general. Of course, in the Middle East, his intervention and leadership was certainly welcomed by the Egyptians and Israelis at least and many other Arab governments as well. The 1976-79 period build on the foundations laid by the Kissinger efforts and one might say that the goal of our efforts from 1973 on was to achieve some stability on the region. We were fortunate that the key players in the Middle East stayed in place during this period and that Ford was succeeded by a President who was even more committed to finding solutions in the Middle East than his predecessors. The process that culminated in a peace agreement in 1979 was based on the long, hard work that all the participants had devoted to the effort for many years, including an unusual commitment of a President of the United States. By Spring 1979, all the ingredients were in place and the peace agreement resulted.

Q: Let me return to the question of your personal involvement in the peace process during the 1977-79 period. You mentioned that 1976 was in part devoted to an analysis of the Palestinian dimensions of the Middle East problem. Did you find that issue personally interesting?

SAUNDERS: Yes, I did. I mentioned earlier that in the Fall of 1975, Lee Hamilton, then the Chairman of the Middle East subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, held a series of hearings focussing on the Palestinian dimensions of the Arab-Israel peace process. He asked the administration to send a witness to his hearings. Kissinger didn't want to go because his words would have been taken as a major policy statement. Sisco didn't want to do it for similar reasons. Roy was otherwise engaged, so the task fell to me as the Deputy Assistant Secretary most closely involved in the peace process. I could be characterized as the senior professional; that is not a political appointee with

policy making powers. I was an expert and therefore my views could always be disowned. The hearings were one indicator of the increasing attention that the Palestinians were attracting. Kissinger was aware of this new dimension as well. Assad, for example, wanted Kissinger to meet the PLO representative in Damascus. Sadat wanted to do the same with the PLO representative in Cairo. It was clear that the Arabs were giving us signals that the Palestinians had to become involved in the process. That pressure started with the Arab summit held in Rabat in the Fall of 1974. It was then that the Arabs declared the PLO as the “sole and legitimate representatives” of the Palestinian people.

I was attracted to the idea of Palestinian involvement. I have always viewed conflict as not just a matter between states, but rather between people. The heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict lay in the question of the rights of two national group who both claimed the same territory. It seemed to me increasingly, until that issue was addressed, you really could not solve the larger problems. Egypt might sign a peace treaty with Israel, but the other Arab states would wait until the Palestinian problem was appropriately dealt with. So I saw the heart of the Arab-Israel conflict lying in Palestine—or whatever one wished to call that territory. When I was asked to testify, I noted that the most that the US government had ever had to say about this core issue was contained in a Ford-Brezhnev communiqu# issued after their meeting in Vladivostok which took place in the Fall of 1974. In general that statement said that the legitimate interests of the Palestinian people had to be dealt with. That was as far as the US government had gone. In preparation for the hearings, I wrote out a four-five page statement which I gave to my office directors and other professionals in the Department. We spent a weekend scrubbing out of the statement any word or punctuation that might upset anybody. I wanted the most dispassionate, analytical and straight forward statement that could be produced. It was as dry as dust and therefore as unassailable as possible. Sisco was out of town at the time. I showed it to Roy who found it acceptable. Roy and I went to see Kissinger; he made some changes which we incorporated. That meant that the Secretary of State had approved my statement. I delivered it to the subcommittee sometime in November. Then came the questioning.

Hamilton pushed me very hard on the question of why we were not talking to the PLO or bringing it into the process. He, of course, knew the answer; I took the administration line that we could not engage the PLO until it was willing to recognize Israel, but I added that I thought that we had to find some way to include the Palestinians. The key sentence went something like “In many ways, the Palestinian dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the heart of that conflict”. That captured my belief and posed the issue that we would have deal with before stability returned to the area. There was no media representative in the room, even though it was an open meeting. I guess the press didn't think the hearing important enough to cover it. But as soon as I left the hearing room, an Israeli correspondent ran up to me and asked me to repeat what I said in the hearing room. I told him to get a hold of my statement. He proudly told me later that he took that statement, glanced at it, went to a pay phone, called his newspaper and dictated a story. I have never read the story but I was told that when the story appeared in the Sunday editions in Israel—just before the regular Sunday Israel Cabinet meeting—the Cabinet condemned my statement. I doubt whether they had seen the full text, but they reacted on the basis of the newspaper story. In light of the Israeli condemnation, the Arabs felt that it must have been great, even though they probably had not read it either. It certainly was the longest statement ever made on the Palestinians. There is now a volume of the Journal of Palestine Studies which includes what they called the “Saunders Document”.

So I did see the Palestinian dimension as the heart of the Arab-Israel conflict and felt that until that issue was addressed we would not be dealing with the core of the conflict. That did not mean that I was pro-Palestinian, although as Abba Eban once said “if you are not 100% for us, you are against us!”. In the 1970s, the Israelis did not want to recognize the Palestinians as a discrete people nor were they really willing to acknowledge their existence; my statement made them uneasy. From those hearings on through the studies conducted in 1976 we learned about the Palestinians. So when the Carter administration decided to consider the Palestinian dimension in the Middle East peace process, we were ready, having done our analytical homework. Carter went to a town meeting in Clinton,

Massachusetts in March 1977 where he mentioned a “homeland” for the Palestinians. Bill Quandt has always wondered where he got that word. As far as we know, Carter coined it himself. I think he felt at that moment that he could break some of the semantic crockery because he was a new boy on the block; he probably felt he was in a position to get the Palestinian issue on the agenda. So the knowledge we had acquired during our study period coupled with a President willing to raise the issue made for a very fortuitous confluence of internal forces.

I once asked Carter, after his term as President, why he had come to the White House with the Palestinian issue high on his Middle East agenda. He said: “I just saw it as a human rights problem”. Then he went on to discuss how he had lived through desegregation in Georgia and how he actually had involved himself in that movement. I asked him how, in the context of the Southern Baptist conference to which he belonged, he had ended up on the pro-desegregation side. You might remember that shortly before he became President, Carter had been part of a group in his own congregation, which had taken a pro-desegregation stand and which eventually formed a separate congregation. His answer was very simple: “My Mama!”. He told me how Ms. Lillian, as a nurse, had administered to whoever needed it without regard to race. Both his father and Mrs. Carter's father came from a different tradition; he respected them, but the subject was never discussed among them. He had gotten his sense of race relations from his mother. He instinctively felt that all people in Georgia had been worse off because of segregation and that a society that included all members was far stronger and better off. Somehow, he made the mental leap from Georgia to the Middle East, although the two situations were hardly analogous, and reached the conclusion that the Palestinians were in many respects like the disenfranchised people of the South. So the Palestinian dimension was a human rights issue.

Parenthetically, I should say that the Carter human rights policies took a lot of forms, not all of which were beneficial. It seemed to me that Carter was recognizing that in the Third World, in the context of the Cold War, people esteemed the United States. This

may not be true any longer in 1994, but during the late 1970s, Third World people knew something about our Declaration of Independence and The Bill of Rights; they vaguely knew something about our values system. The Soviet Union built stadia for them, but that did not attract them to the Soviet system. They did respect what they perceived the US stood for: individual liberty. In some way, Carter, who was not a “power politics” warrior as had been his predecessors, thought that the competition between the superpowers in the Third World had to be on the issue of values and ideas. He believed that the United States could successfully respond to the philosophical cravings of the large segments of the world's populations. Reagan continued this approach, but in an entirely different way. Carter saw this opportunity first as a genuine human being and secondly as a strategic advantage for the United States, which had not been adequately used in the US-Soviet Union contest. This is another reason that he put the Palestinian dimension high on his foreign policy agenda. Those of us who were veterans of the Middle East peace process knew pretty well where this new dimension might fit in the process and how it might be inserted into the Arab-Israeli dialogue.

In a way, the Camp David Accords were part of the human rights tapestry. The Egyptian needed and wanted the Palestinian dimension included in the Camp David accords, but it was we Americans who were able to weave it in. Begin had contributed some ideas, such as the autonomy plan as a transition period. Of course, even now in 1994, we are trying to complete the tapestry, although obviously much progress has been made since the late 1970s.

I should note that when I refer to the Palestinians in the late 1970s, I am not referring to the PLO because our policy then and for many years before and afterward we knew that the Israelis would reject any contacts with the PLO. So we had to find other ways to get in touch with the Palestinian community. I explored all the different avenues to do this, but we did not talk to the PLO. The Camp David Accords focussed on bringing the Palestinians into the peace process through a two-stage negotiating process over a five year transition period. The first stage focussed on autonomy negotiations for the people of the West

Bank and Gaza; the second stage was to take place at the end of the five year transitional period and focus on the negotiations of the final status of the West Bank and Gaza. That was the Camp David design.

We did recognize that the only the Egyptians, Israelis and the Americans were represented at Camp David. I remember the professionals, one night while we were working on the draft accords, saying that we were being too declarative about Jordan's reactions and actions. We recognized that since the Jordanians were not present, it would have been a grave mistake to write into any documents a role for them without consulting them and obtaining their approval. So we changed our statements to the conditional tense. We fully recognized that the Jordanians and the Palestinians were not at Camp David. The day after the Accords were signed, Carter called King Hussein and told him about the Accords and the role that they suggested for Jordan. He told the King that the US recognized that his country had not been represented at Camp David and that the time had come for some consultations. He had hoped that His Majesty would refrain from making any comments until those consultations had taken place. Vance was in a complete state of exhaustion, but Carter nevertheless asked him to go to Amman. So on Tuesday, Vance, Atherton and I found ourselves on a plane heading for Jordan.

During these consultations in Amman, Hussein asked us fourteen questions about Camp David; all were designed to give him some feel of how the Accords affected Jordan. Vance brought those questions back and assigned action for response to the to the NEA Bureau. Two or three of my staff members and I began to draft the replies. I had a couple of people who, even though not having been at Camp David, had intimate knowledge of process there and who could draft replies to queries concerning what had transpired there. We probably shared our drafts with Bill Quandt before they went to the President or perhaps even the Secretary. Bill had from the beginning been accepted by Vance as part of the Department's team; we shared views and information constantly with him. We didn't

engage in any bureaucratic warfare as had occurred in the previous administration. He was a low key, decent, intelligent professional; it was a pleasure to work with him.

Some of the answer were significant interpretations of the accords; they were in effect our perceptions of the meanings of the Accords. Not all of these interpretations were bound to be agreed upon by the Israelis, but they were our position on the Accords. When we in the Department had finally agreed on the formulation of the fourteen answers, we took them to Carter. He spent some time with them; then he signed them at the bottom of the last page. In the meantime, Vance had asked me to lay out what I considered to be the principal differences between the Camp David Accords and the Begin autonomy plan, which had been presented to us and the Egyptians right after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. Many Arabs were characterizing the Accords as a mere reformulation of the Begin plan. In fact, Begin himself was saying to his political right wing that the Accords were not substantially different from what the Cabinet had already approved when it considered the autonomy plan. I found at least five major differences. My analysis was used on the Voice of America and other fora.

Then I was commissioned to go to Amman with the answers to the King's questions. As a point of historical interest, I was accompanied on that trip by Nat Howell, who later was our Ambassador to Kuwait when the Iraqis invaded that country. At that time, he was assigned to NEA. I was also asked to go to Saudi Arabia to brief them. I was to cross the Allenby bridge and talk to the Palestinians on the West Bank. Then I was to move on to Israel for discussions in Jerusalem. Since my task was to persuade the moderate Arabs that the Camp David Accords took some of their concerns into account, I obviously used the five point difference between the accords and the Begin plan as talking points. I was arguing a non-Israeli view of Camp David. It was a Carter view since it was based on the Carter approved-and-signed answers to the fourteen questions. That was not something Begin wanted to hear. At the same time, the Iraqi were organizing what became two conferences in Baghdad; the second concluded by condemning the Camp David Accords. That added another dimension to my trip because now I also had to try to convince the Jordanians and

the Saudis to disregard the conclusions of the second Baghdad conference. I thought that although the Iraqis were a threat in the area, there was a chance that the Jordanians and the Saudis might ignore them. In fact, they led me to believe that they would do so, but in the end they did cave in.

I had a four hour meeting with Crown Prince Fahd during which I used every ploy I knew to try to persuade him that Camp David was part of a political process which was a beginning to incorporate the Palestinian dimensions into the Arab-Israeli dialogue. I pointed out that we could not openly talk about a Palestinian state; that that would have to come in a step-by-step process, starting with autonomy discussions and implementation. I argued the same case with King Hussein. He was passionate on the subject of the Palestinians. I was accompanied by Nick Veliotes, then our Ambassador in Amman. Hussein was pretty cool to my presentation. I thought we would have a very short meeting. I just kept talking. Finally, he said to me, in an eloquent, but somewhat jumbled comment,:

“Look, Hal, you know I would do anything I could do to bring peace to my people. I would give my life if that would do it!”. Then he began to talk about the recent death of his wife in a helicopter crash. That chopper and its pilot were the same ones that had flown Hussein to the secret meetings he had held with the Israelis in Tel Aviv and elsewhere. Somehow, he viewed the death of his wife as having been caused by the unsafe practices—low altitude and no lights—that his pilot had been forced to use during some of the secret trips. It was not a happy session.

Later I talked to one of Hussein's senior advisors; I repeated my view that the peace process was an on-going and extended process. He said to me that Jordanians were a desert people; they would never leave one oasis without knowing where the next one would be. Therefore, the Jordanian culture and language did not incorporate the thought of an “open end” political process. Toward the end of the meeting, Hussein said that he thought that there was nothing wrong with the ideas that underlay the Camp David

Accords, but that he had serious doubts that the United States could deliver the promises made. And I guess that, in that context, he was probably right.

I then went to the West Bank, where I am sure the Israeli taped most of my meetings with West Bank Palestinians. These sessions were arranged by Mike Newlin, our Consul General in Jerusalem and held in the living room of his residence. Don Kruse, who was Mike's deputy, hosted a dinner at his house for the senior technocrats—the people who ran the hospitals and other institutions. I also met with a number of other individuals. The prominent politicians told me that they could not make a move without the PLO. I suggested that there were a number of ways that the PLO could become involved. There could, for example, be a meeting held which would allow the representatives of all Palestinian factions to come to some conclusions; then the PLO could quietly deputize some inhabitants of the West Bank to enter the negotiations with the Israelis and us. I thought that there were several means available which would permit the PLO to play a prominent role without giving it a seat at a table at which the Israeli also sat. We discussed all these possibilities and, as I said, undoubtedly the Israelis had all of the conversations on tape. Even before I had a chance to meet with Begin, the Israeli right wing was attacking him on the Camp David Accords which it saw as the first step to a Palestinian state. The day I arrived in Jerusalem, the Jerusalem Post ran an op-ed piece by Shlomo Katz, a right winger, entitled America's Salami Tactics. It was his view that the Accords were the first slice in the process leading to a Palestinian state. Part of the Israeli press was quite negative about my activities. I went to see Begin, accompanied by Sam Lewis, our Ambassador to Israel. The Prime Minister first of all took out a letter that he said he had received from a number of his Irgun comrades. He was full of anger; he said that all of his best friends were attacking him over Camp David. I am sure that he was upset by what his right wing friends were saying.

I was somewhat disappointed by the Palestinian reaction. I had hoped and thought it possible that they would be more forthcoming. I thought we were offering them some very modest initiatives with which they could acquiesce. We were not seeking major steps;

we were arguing a case which today, fifteen years later—they essentially accept. The strategy was built on something we had recognized the moment that Begin had offered his autonomy plan in 1977. He was essentially offering autonomy for West Bank areas that then were under Israeli military occupation. That area was circumscribed by the Jordan River on one side, the old “Green line”—the 1967 border—on the other, except for those parts of Jerusalem that had been annexed by Israel. I remember walking out of the Cabinet room after Begin's presentation and asking Bill Quandt whether he had heard the same thing that I had heard. I thought that for the purposes of this autonomy initiative, Begin was willing to return to the 1967 borders. Of course, Begin never considered that his proposal would go beyond administrative autonomy; the Camp David Accords were quite consistent with the Begin plan. So I argued with the Arabs and the Palestinians that they should accept the Begin plan, even if it didn't meet their full demands, because it would enable them to administratively govern over an area which was essentially the same as they had before the 1967 war. I thought that if the Palestinians could show that they could competently administer these territories, they could after five years be negotiating about the final borders from a firmly established base; all discussions would have to be about extending the 1967 borders, not about restoring those boundaries. It was a Likud government that had granted them these borders; they would be foolish not to take them. I thought that by the time the final negotiations were to begin, the Palestinians and the Arabs would be dealing with a Labor government and a much more flexible negotiating partner. I probably should not have been articulating such a strategy in Begin's back-yard, being well aware that my words were being taped and would be given to Begin. But I did it anyway; I felt that it was a sufficiently calculated strategy which would serve Palestinian interests.

Some of them did recognize that fact. One of the West Bank leaders was trying to agree with my argument, but all the others were talking about why it couldn't be done. At the end of the evening, that West Banker threw up his hands and said that the Palestinians were all sheep destined to follow and not to lead. He was very frustrated by the conversation.

The technocrats, on the other hand, were fascinated and began to ask specific questions about their authority to budget, land use, etc. They were thinking about the details and the possibilities that autonomy would bring to them in running their own institutions. They saw autonomy as significant progress from their present situation. They were intrigued by the prospects. But in the final analysis, the PLO wouldn't buy the proposal and therefore the Arab states wouldn't. I did make a strong case that autonomy had great advantages for the Palestinians, but when it was not accepted, I was naturally disappointed.

The West Bank and Gaza Palestinians were to be the beneficiaries of the autonomy agreements. There was however a much larger Palestinian community that resided throughout the Arab world and some in the Western world as well. The Arab countries, at a summit meeting condemned the autonomy concept. It very difficult for any Palestinian really to support autonomy agreement without the support of the Arab countries if no other reason that they depended on financial support from many of those countries. In theory, of course, the Arab countries could have pushed the Palestinians into the autonomy talks, but that is not what we were seeking. I was only asking Jordan and Saudi Arabia not to give a negative review of the Camp David Accords. I was really trying to forestall the second Baghdad summit that condemned the autonomy negotiations discussions. I would have been satisfied by silence. These countries might well have worked against the negotiations behind the scene, but that would have been different from a public condemnation.

Q: In light of the deplorable living and economic conditions that many Palestinians faced, did the United States feel that these deprivations were at the root of the Palestinian problem?

SAUNDERS: I don't remember giving that dimension too much weight. There were a number of people who argued that we should be providing economic incentives to bring the Palestinians into the negotiating process. I didn't feel then and I don't feel today that in a deep human conflict such as represented by the Arab-Israeli confrontation,

economic incentives are going to overcome deep-seeded resentments and hatreds. I don't think economic incentives cause people to give up their identity clashes, their historical grievances or their fears and animosities. Those factors have to be overcome by other means in the political arena, not in the economic one.

Q: What other issues did you personally work on in the 1978 period leading up to Camp David?

SAUNDERS: During the Kissinger period, I was responsible for the analytical work which underlay our policy goals as well as the check-lists used during the shuttles and the drafting of the agreements that were reached. That continued after Kissinger and my role remained essentially unchanged until Camp David. For example, I mentioned that after the Leeds Castle conference I drafted the first version of what eventually was to become the Camp David accords. I just tried to continually advance the framework which led to the ultimate accords.

When I became Assistant Secretary, I inherited the responsibilities for the day-to-day supervision of the our role in the peace process. For example, in October 1977, the drafting and negotiations of what became the Vance-Gromyko statement was very much on our minds. Roy was in New York working with the Soviets on the text. He was also consulting the Egyptians and the Israelis on the text. I know what happened but I did not have the personal involvement that Roy had. I was still responsible for the product; I would take it to Vance and discuss it with him. I was the channel for the instructions that went to Roy. That makes a lot of difference to the role one plays and how one feels about a situation and how you remember it. It also makes some difference in the bureaucracy when you are a regional assistant secretary.

Q: Now let me return to Camp David. Tell us about the US delegation.

SAUNDERS: There was five men professional team, headed by Vance. The five were Vance, Atherton, Lewis, Eilts and myself. Then there was a political team centering on

Carter which consisted of Jordan, Powell, Brzezinski and Quandt. Mondale was not at Camp David most of the time, but was part of that group. There may have been a couple of others in addition. Vance was the bridge between the professional and the political teams since he was really part of both. But Carter really demonstrated his capacity to use the professionals. Before he would talk to Begin, he would talk with Sam Lewis or if he wanted to propose something to Sadat, he would first pass it by Hermann Eilts. If he had a comment or a question about the draft text, he would call me or Roy or Bill. Although there was some division of labor just for practical reason—e.g. because of my role in the shuttles, I did much of the drafting—we all worked together in a collegiate atmosphere. From shuttles, I learned that to make progress in a process you had to write it down. Obviously, much thought had to be given to what went on the paper, but I became the scribe.

Statements of general principles, useful as they might be, are not nearly enough to push a process forward. At Camp David, we had a draft; the Israelis and the Egyptians presented their papers. We did not surface our text until the second week. It seemed to me after reading the Egyptian and Israeli papers, that we had to come up with a text and let the parties work from there. I took the original text that had been developed by me and others after Leeds and the papers given to us at Camp David and put them together in a new agreement text. I did that on a Friday night when the delegations were in recess because it was Shabbat evening. My secretary rose early Saturday morning to type the new text, which I didn't finish until late the night before. Around six, I went to her office and gathered there with some of the other members of the American delegation and we all read the paper. Then it was off to breakfast; there either Vance or Brzezinski ran in and said that the President wanted a draft of an agreement by one o'clock. I said that if we could meet at nine, we would be able to present a draft to the senior Presidential advisors. That would give us the rest of the morning revising it and then it could be provided the President by one o'clock. And so it happened, much to Brzezinski's surprise; he didn't think that the President's request could be met. He was much surprised that we were ahead of the

President. In any case, Vance and Brzezinski went over the draft very carefully. After they left around ten, Roy and I sat down with the professional team. Soon thereafter, I left to get the typing started; I asked Roy to bring me the changes as soon as they were being made. By one o'clock, we were ready and were able to sit with the President to review the draft. We then made further changes, but by the end of the afternoon, our draft was ready and Carter gave it to one of the principals that night and to the other the next morning. I found it interesting that the President felt the need to get something on paper after a few days of discussions in order to bring some focus and precision to the dialogue.

I remember that sometime during the second week Carter said to several of us that he didn't know how to bring the meeting to a close. At that point, it was he who had the idea of forming a little drafting group which he would chair with Vance and a representative from each of the other two sides. Sadat picked Osama El-Baz and Begin picked Aharon Barak, his Attorney General, who turned out to be a marvelous problem solver. So the four of them worked from our text; Carter made that text the center of the policy debates and resolutions and compromises were reached by all sides through this drafting avenue.

The original draft went through 22 versions; I was the keeper and recorder of each and every version. Monday, the day after the signing ceremony, Vance called me to ask how many drafts had been prepared. I was able to give him an answer by counting the different versions that I had kept in one notebook. I don't know whether my answer was 100% accurate, but it became a historical fact.

The atmospherics at Camp David changed almost hourly. They changed in subgroups depending on who was working on what. The work had an amoeba-like quality to it. One group of people would be working one problem; another group would be talking about something else. Two individuals might be conversing about an issue. Periodically, all the participants would meet around the round table. The Americans would meet with one team and then with the other. It was ebb and flow all the time. At certain moments, the atmosphere was more tense than at others, but that didn't last very long. The tensest

period was, of course, toward the end of the second week. There was apparently one occasion—I didn't personally hear it—when Sadat flatly said that he was going to leave, out of sheer frustration. That is recorded both in Carter's and Quandt's book. Carter really went to work and made Sadat see that he couldn't walk out. On the last day, Begin manufactured a confrontation over Jerusalem. All these things happened towards the end of the second week as we were heading for decision time. It was an entirely different atmosphere from Leeds Castle because at Camp David, we intended to come away with a written agreement.

For me, the tensest moment came at the White House as the Accords were to be signed Sunday night. I knew how deeply troubled the Egyptian team was and I am sure Sadat felt a lot of that. At the very end of our time at Camp David—around four o'clock Sunday afternoon—Carter met with Sadat. I had been called over to Carter's lodge. When I walked in, I saw Carter and Sadat coming down the hall from Carter's study. I stepped aside as they said goodbye to each other. Carter turned away from the door and said: “I think we have an agreement, but I was afraid to ask him!”. Indeed there came to be an agreement, but on Sunday evening, right before the signing ceremony, Carter asked me to come in and show everybody the actual copies that were to be signed. There were two documents: the framework for peace in the Middle East, which focussed on the Palestinian issue in the larger context and the framework for a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt. After Carter had shown people where they were to sign, he handed the documents back to me and said: “Now the framework for peace in the Middle East is to be signed by everybody and removed from the table before the framework for peace between Egypt and Israel is presented for signature”. He then looked at me as if he would kill me if his instructions were not followed to the letter. He told me that President Sadat insisted on that scenario. That told me and others that Sadat knew that he would be accused by the Arab world of getting the Sinai back for Egypt, but getting only a very vague agreement for every one else, especially the Palestinians. By demanding that sequence, Sadat was signaling that the framework of importance to the Palestinians, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon came first

and that the Egyptian-Israeli peace framework was a subset of the first agreement. It was symbolism, but it gave me a sense of how grave Sadat's feeling were. My only feeling as I watched the signing was not one of exhilaration by any means; I just thought that this was something that had to be done to permit us to proceed tomorrow with the next steps. I may have been exhausted; I might have been influenced by Sadat's concerns; I knew how imperfect the documents were and how much had not been resolved. In any case, I viewed that ceremony with great concern. I recognized the achievement, but I also foresaw the long road ahead. Time and time again, we had told each other at Camp David that given another thirteen days, we could resolve the outstanding issues. But we knew we didn't have any more time. At the end of the two weeks, the decision was to take what had been agreed upon and then to start on another round of negotiations foreseen by the Camp David accords to deal with the outstanding and unresolved questions.

Q: Do you consider Camp David as a good model for international negotiations?

SAUNDERS: I believe that it was an excellent model, but I am not sure that such negotiations should be conducted at the Presidential levels. There are very few Presidents or Prime Ministers who could conduct such negotiations. But I think that Camp David-like discussions and negotiations could be very useful at the Foreign Minister level. The concept of an intensive, uninterrupted work period is immensely valuable. I can't believe that any President since Carter would have so become engaged. It is possible that Nixon might have had the ability to participate and lead such a meeting. But I can't think of any others who might have been able and willing to spend thirteen days dealing with so many complex issues.

I think Foreign Minister level meetings might be a better process. You, of course, would have to consider the personalities of the principals. In the Middle East you have a strange situation since the parties there have become habituated to the idea that no progress could be made unless the President of the United States wasn't personally involved. That is a very bad idea.

Another model that should be examined is Chet Crocker's mediation efforts of the Namibia-Angola-South Africa accords which were negotiated at the end of the Reagan administration. There you had an assistant secretary of State who led the process. He didn't gather all the parties for thirteen days; he did however bring people together at remote sites for three to five days. His efforts were not trumpeted around because there isn't that much attention devoted to the doings of an assistant secretary. But he essentially followed the same work model that we used at Camp David. Chet Crocker participated as the representative of the Secretary of State and the President; he was deputized in a way that I, as Assistant Secretary for NEA, was deputized during the Camp David period for only specific assignments, such as my trip to the area after the signing of the accords. I participated in the process, but I was viewed in general as a senior advisor to the Secretary and the President who were the mediators. In Chet's case, he was the mediator. But the Camp David work process was an excellent model, but it would have to be a very unusual situation if it were to involve the heads of state or government.

That Camp David worked so well might have been unexpected. The three principals had very different personalities and one would have thought that they could not mix very well. In fact, at Camp David, there was very little time spent with all three heads of government involved simultaneously and together. There were many one-on-one occasions, but trilateral meetings were rare.

By the time Camp David concluded, I was immensely gratified by what had been achieved. There was no question that the Accords were a singular accomplishment. That success can not be minimized. But as I said earlier, I did sense the political risks that both Begin and Sadat were taking. I knew that both would be heavily attacked by their constituencies and that both would have to cope with an unsympathetic political climate, which might jeopardize the Accords. I also understood how much remained to be done. On the final Sunday, I had already begun to worry about the next steps, but that did not minimize what had been accomplished. And indeed the problems surfaced the next day.

There was another moment that no one, except my most intimate colleagues, have ever mentioned. There was a moment that was almost more moving and more important to me. Maybe I was little more rested by then and was getting ready for the next chapter. That moment came when the Israeli and Egyptian teams arrived in Washington to negotiate the peace treaty. These were sizeable teams—they had lawyers, economists, soldiers, diplomats. Carter received them one morning in the State Dining Room in the White House for some coffee and refreshments. He held a welcoming ceremony. There is a picture of all of us together. I remember thinking to myself that this was a real occasion. All the participants had gathered to negotiate the holiest of international documents—a peace treaty. There were these huge delegations with a common goal. I had only been involved up to that time in flights between capitals, writing texts of agreements, writing about military positions—a subject about which I knew nothing and needed the help of the closest available military attach#. That was all “seat of the pants” work. Even Camp David, significant as it was since there were three Presidents or Prime Ministers there, was an example of small groups writing and rewriting documents. But the Israeli and Egyptian peace agreement teams consisted of professionals, writing legally binding, economically sound, diplomatically proper, militarily approved documents. All the right paper would be used; all the treaty negotiating processes that had been worked out over centuries would be used. That seemed to me to be almost more significant than the Camp David Accords, which in some ways was the final chapter in the “framework documents” process and the beginning to the return to the more traditional peace making process. That White House welcoming ceremony was a very powerful moment for me.

On Sunday night after Camp David, I was optimistic that a peace treaty could be signed. I was more optimistic than subsequent events warranted. We had more trouble with the peace treaty than I thought we would. The process that started when the two large delegations arrived took six months. That doesn't mean that all members were in Washington for that period of time, but some representative of each side was here for most of the time. The senior people returned to their capitals to consult with their

governments, but by and large, work went on almost all of the time. Some of the most interesting and significant work was done while the Cabinet officials went back to Israel for consultations. The military stayed in Washington and produced a military annex. They tackled their issues in a highly professional manner and were able to reach accord on maps, etc. So when the politicians were ready to agree to something, the military annex was ready. These military meetings took place in the living rooms of the suites in the Madison Hotel where the two delegations were housed.

The peace treaty process started rather formally with meetings in the Blair House which had been reserved for this purpose. A new wrinkle was added to the usual process. After Camp David, as we faced the prospect of the peace treaty negotiations, both sides asked the US to produce a draft. So when the two delegations began their meetings, they had a draft in front of them. That draft was not written in a vacuum; we knew enough from Camp David and other contacts that we could take the framework agreement, which the two parties signed, and put its sense into treaty format. There were some blanks that had to be filled in by the parties; there were some annexes listed which still had to be written. But it was a base to start discussions and we felt that the two parties had reached the appropriate conclusions about our role. They did not any longer see the US as the party that was trying to force something down the throats of the other participants; they saw us a honest mediators who could come up with a first draft that was balanced. It saved the Israelis and the Egyptians the painful process of each drafting a document and then exchanging them and then trying to marry the two documents. In negotiating theory, this is called the “single negotiating” text—i.e. someone prepared a text that all parties use as a point of departure.

The use of a single text certainly saved a lot of time because it was a well prepared text with supporting documentation. We had a drafting team that put the text together; it was a more elaborate team than had been used previously. I think Roy probably supervised the drafting task. Because I had other responsibilities—such as the trip to the Middle East that I described earlier—, I was not as intensely involved in this exercise as I had been in

the Camp David drafting work. As you might expect, there were major issues. We were represented on all the working groups by our experts.

I mentioned that I had other problems on my hands while the peace treaty drafting and negotiations were going on. For example, while at Camp David, one of the significant events leading up to the fall of the Shah of Iran took place. That was the riot in Tehran. Carter actually called the Shah from Camp David to encourage him and give him support. So during the fall of 1978 I was busy with events in Tehran. By the end of that year, the Shah was ready to leave Iran and we were evacuating some 40,000 Americans who were living in Iran. In February 1979, Khomeini returned to his home land. The American Embassy was occupied for the first time. Spike Dubs was assassinated.

The first thing that happened when I became Assistant Secretary was a change of governments in Afghanistan. That was followed by a period of turmoil in that country that culminated into the Soviet invasion of December 1979. There had been reports on Soviet build up on the border, so that the invasion did not come as a surprise. We did not of course know for certain if and when the invasion would take place, but there had been warnings. I believe that if you would ask Cy Vance, he would tell you that he is very unhappy with himself for not having been more vigorous with Gromyko in early December over the invasion potential, as indicated by the troop movements and the build up. Soviet generals had visited the front since the summer. Vance had asked Marshal Shulman to tell Dobrynin that any Soviet movement into Afghanistan would be taken very seriously by Washington. But in retrospect, I think Vance now thinks that he should have personally called Dobrynin to warn him that the arms control treaty negotiations would have to be abandoned if an invasion were to take place.

So we had problems in Afghanistan and Iran plus the normal issues that arise in a region as large as NEA. Pakistan and India were relatively quite during the 1978-79 period. I was very fortunate to have good deputies who were assigned parts of the total labor. These officers were competent enough that Secretary Vance, Deputy Secretary Christopher

and Under Secretary for Political Affairs Dave Newsom became sufficiently comfortable that they would deal directly with the deputies on specific issues. It would have been an impossible situation otherwise; I was concentrating on Camp David at the beginning of my tour as Assistant Secretary and on the Iran hostage crisis at the end. Without that close-knit team, NEA problems would have become a nightmare. I knew the way the deputies thought; they knew each other well. I was never uncomfortable in turning certain problems over to one or the other. I accepted this accumulation of problems as a matter of course. That is the way NEA has always been and probably will always be.

If more time had been available, I certainly would have liked to devote it to Iran. I don't believe that the US government handled that sequence of events starting in 1978 very well. In fact, there was probably a decade of shortcomings. I don't believe that while I was the Assistant Secretary, we were adequate in our response and analysis of the evolving situation in Iran. By the time we came to agree on some actions that we might have taken, it was too late for them to be effective. For example, we should have encouraged the Shah to broaden his base of political support long before we did. We should have encouraged him to deal with his opposition much before we did so that he could have managed it before it really coalesced into an implacable opposition. I believe that if we had sat down early enough and given Iran the attention that it needed that we might have had different results. If we, the US government, had given even a third of the attention or even a fourth of what we were giving to the Arab-Israeli conflict we might not have changed the course of events, but I think we could have been more satisfied than we were that we had given Iran our best efforts. But if we had given as much attention to Iran in 1978 as we did when the hostages were taken, the US government might have done something quite different. It was the difference of 1:100 in terms of time devoted. I should hasten to add that no one that I know of foresaw in 1978 that nine months later, the Shah would have left Iran. I could be wrong, but while I was still Director of INR—until April 1978—I remember one of my INR colleagues bringing to the Department approximately six American scholars and experts on Iran. We spent some time talking to them about the situation in Iran. I don't

believe that any one at that meeting even came close to predicting what actually happened later that year and in 1979. Certainly no one expected events to move as rapidly as they did nor the eventual outcome. But I do believe that if we had given more time to analyzing trends and events in Iran, the US government might not have been as divided on what to do about the Shah and Iran as we were. Brzezinski had his own channel to the Iranian government and was sending one set of signals in October-November 1978. Bill Sullivan, our Ambassador in Tehran, was getting different instructions. So the US government was not presenting a united front in Iran. Gary Sick documents that period well.

Maybe if I had spent more time thinking about Iran, if I had perhaps talked to more people about the situation there, if I had given it the attention I gave other issues, perhaps I could have detected the underlaying currents and warned my colleagues that the political stability was very fragile and was not of the same nature of previous unrest that the Shah managed to calm. There were some unknowns. For example, we did not know that the Shah had cancer. There was a lot of critical information that was not available to us. I feel worse about our policy development process as it concerned Iran than any mistakes we may have made in the Middle East peace process. We all missed the boat in Iran—bureaucrats, scholars, experts. If we had taken a calendar of 1978 and wrote on it the dates when different people came to the conclusion that the Shah's reign was coming to an end, perhaps Henry Precht, the Iran office director, and Peter Constable might show up as early as July. Our people in the consulates in Iran might be shown much earlier than that. They could not understand why we didn't see the handwriting on the wall. The main reason was that their reports were not being forwarded by the Embassy in Tehran to Washington. So it took too long for those signals to reach us in the bureau. Precht did talk to the consulate people by phone; he was spending a lot of time on analyzing the currents in Iran. It wasn't until November that Ambassador Sullivan sent in his cable “Thinking the Unthinkable”. In a slight exaggeration, I am not sure that Brzezinski would have been put on that calendar until the day that the Shah actually left Iran. I don't think he wanted to believe that that could be an outcome; he felt that there could be a military solution, in

which we could assist even in the days just before the Shah's departure. Of course, by that time, the Shah's cancer had spread and his living days were numbered.

By the end of 1979, the hostage crisis was at a peak and it became my overwhelming pre-occupation. On the Middle East, in April or May, 1979—a month or two after the peace treaty was signed—we immediately went to the next stage of the peace process which was the beginning of the negotiations on Palestinian autonomy on the West Bank and Gaza. There was a meeting in the Negev, attended by Vance, Bob Strauss—who was then the Middle East negotiator—the Israelis and the Egyptians. The subject was autonomy. I traveled to the Middle East with Bob Strauss whenever he went to the region. Around the time that Strauss was succeeded by Sol Linowitz, the hostage crisis began. I never returned to the Middle East after that to discuss the Arab-Israeli peace process. Linowitz was supported by a strong team of professionals, but whenever Middle East issues arose, I would become involved, but there were limits to my involvement because of the events in Iran.

So I was involved in all the issues arising in my area of jurisdiction. As I said, I probably did not spend enough time on Iran before the Shah's downfall. When the hostage crisis arose, I spent enough time on that problem, given the fact that here was a substantial and well-staffed task force in the Operations Center. Linowitz was well staffed. One of my contributions was to see that all these apparently disparate efforts were taken within a total regional point of view.Since the major issues—Iran and Afghanistan—were well supervised and staffed in 1979, I felt that both were being attended to it adequately. If there was any neglect, it was in 1978 and before when the whole US government did not pay enough attention to Iran.

Let me just say a few words about the conduct of the hostage crisis. If I were to be proud of our government's handling of a particular situation, I would obviously be very positive about the Arab-Israeli peace process, not just because of what was achieved, but also because the way we managed it. We had terrific team-work; we had a sound analytical

basis for our policies; the professionals involved were very competent; and we had as much political support for making progress as we wanted and needed. Strangely enough, I would give the hostage crisis the same high marks. First of all, we must recognize that when the hostages were taken we faced a terrible mess. We may, as I suggested earlier, have made mistakes in the pre-1979 period that led to the hostage crisis. In any case, once the hostages were seized, despite several strategic decisions that might be argued, I think the government performed quite exemplary. One of the those strategic decisions that might be questioned would be the judgement that the US government kept the crisis in the White House. President Carter's “Rose Garden strategy”—that is his refusal to leave the White House to campaign until the hostages were returned—put him at the center of the crisis. I think everybody—Christopher, Powell, Jordan, et all—would now agree, as we did after we left office in post-mortem analyses, that the President at an early point should have articulated our policy and then delegated the day-to-day negotiations and tactics to the Deputy Secretary of State. He, of course, should have added that he expected to be fully informed and involved if needed, but a President had to run a country and could not spend full time on the hostage issue. Psychologically, that would have removed Carter from the direct line of fire; the Iranians would have been more frustrated because as long as Carter was as deeply involved as he was, he was in fact also an Iranian hostage.

But in terms of the management of a crisis, I think the hostage was one that was meticulously implemented. It was a very, very complicated problem with many facets. That ranged from the resentments of the Iranian students in American academia to the protection of their rights and visas; the question of impounding arms shipments for which the Iranians had already paid; trade embargoes, freezing assets, etc. There were many issues that cut across the responsibilities of various Cabinet departments and agencies. You might criticize the time of Cabinet officers who had to become involved in the crisis —they met six days each week in the Situation Room at the height of the crisis. There was an inordinate amount of time spent on this issue; it was similar to the aftermath of the 1967 war when an oil embargo was imposed. But the US government actions, once

the hostages were taken, were well directed and coordinated, despite the fact that many people had to be involved. We might have been somewhat more effective if the day-to-day issues had been handled below the Presidential level certainly and perhaps even below the Cabinet level.

I believe that, in any policy development and implementation process, the political leadership should become involved only when required, not continually. Obviously, the top of a government will be involved in major issues even if it isn't present at frequent conferences and meetings. The professional subordinates will have either direct instructions on which policies or tactics to support or will have, in most instances, have had sufficient knowledge of their Cabinet boss' views to be able to take a position on individual issues or recommendations. I don't think it is necessary for Presidents and Cabinet officers to devote so much attention and time as they devoted to the Iranian hostage episode. Of course, the Cabinet officers were involved because President Carter was personally so deeply involved.

Cy Vance resigned in April 1980 and was succeeded by Ed Muskie. When in August-September 1979 it became clear that we might begin negotiations about the release of the hostages, Carter asked Christopher to collect a team to develop the US positions. That was done. That team, that working group, managed that rather complicated agreement. It consisted of Bob Coswell, the Deputy Secretary of the Treasury—because of US claim on Iran's and the frozen assets—, an Assistant Attorney General from the Justice Department, the Legal Advisor from the Department of State, Lloyd Cutler—the Counsel to the President—, Gary Sick from the NSC, Arnie Raphel—Vance's and Muskie's executive assistant—, an Assistant Secretary from Defense and myself. That was an effective group that coordinated the activities of all the departments well. We could have had a group like that at the beginning of the crisis instead of only at the end. Of course, there would have been moments when the President would have wished to assure himself about certain actions and policy directions; he could have called an NSC meeting for those purposes. He could have done on a weekly basis. That would have been entirely different that having

Cabinet officers sitting around a table in the Situation Room, chaired by Brzezinski, for an hour and a half every morning for six days every week for some period of time. The whole question of the appropriate level of management of crisis needs further examination.

The creativity of the Department's task force was interesting. We produced a lot of the memoranda that were reviewed by the higher level groups. We collaborated with people in other departments. One of the interesting things that happened was that we had lost almost all intelligence and information collection capacity when the Embassy was over-run. But Henry Precht knew that he could dial Tehran directly. He began to call as many Iranians as he could. He would call people in the business community or the medical community or who ever he could. This went on throughout the crisis. We also soon became aware of how many relatives of senior Iranian officials had married Americans and had American relatives in the US. We asked them to call their friends and relatives in Iran; we talked to them and through them to senior officials in Iran. That led to some very interesting connections. Our capacity to have a dialogue with important Iranians and to collect information was considerably enhanced by this very imaginative telephone network that Precht developed. This was just another example that the crisis that was reasonably well managed by the US, in intra-governmental terms, and that the US government used some imaginative ways to deal with it. There were a lot of unorthodox channels used, which required the adaptation of some creative methods. Most of this is documented in a book that we put together under Christopher's direction, after we all had left government.

Q: One final question, if I may. We have not discussed Islamic fundamentalism. Can you describe the evolution of this phenomenon, starting with your NSC tour?

SAUNDERS: It achieved prominence with Khomeini and the events that led to the overthrow of the Shah. It was in 1979 that this movement began to raise serious policy concerns in Washington. Before that, we were well aware of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan, but even in 1979, when we began to look at a broader trend, we reaffirmed the conclusion that we had reached several years earlier, namely that you

couldn't really develop a policy towards Islamic fundamentalism as an international phenomenon. It had to be faced country by country. There was no question that there cross-border linkages which were accentuated by Khomeini. There was a wind blowing through the area that obviously infused and encouraged local Islamic movements. The Iranians reached out over their borders as they are doing today in Lebanon and perhaps other places. But it was not possible to devise a policy towards a blowing wind; the policy had to be country specific. We spent a lot of time in 1978 and 1979 listening to scholars on this subject. We must have held three or four meetings in the Department. As I mentioned earlier, I was still the Director of INR when we started this series of meetings with scholars. The first one, I think, took place after the second set of demonstrations in Tehran. We invited about 6 experts on Iran. That established a pattern which we continued after the hostages were taken, even though by that time I had become the Assistant Secretary for NEA.

I remember spending a long day in the Roosevelt Room in the White House. The scholars were there at the request of President Carter. He wanted to hear views on this subject. It was discussed as a generic issue, but operationally, the discussion was focussed on the hostages in Iran. Therefore, the specific question was what there was in the Islamic mind and calendar—festivals, religious days—which might bring amnesty. Also, Carter was interested in what might be on Khomeini's mind that made him behave as he did and how might he be approached. Those were the operational questions that drove the discussion on Islam.

My personal view on Islamic fundamentalism is best characterized by an exchange I had with my warm and close personal friend, Gary Sick. After both of us left government, we participated in a panel discussing events that took place in the late 1970s. As far as I am concerned, Gary is the last word on this matter. In any case, on this panel, I said that the Iranian revolution was not essentially an Islamic revolution. I thought that there had been a convergence of deep rooted dissatisfactions ranging from poor economic performance and low wages to Khomeini's pain stemming from the death of his son which

he attributed to the Shah's secret police. It was a strange set of bed-fellows that made the Iranian revolution: the business community, the lower levels of the military, the religious faction, etc. I thought that people should have noticed that phenomenon as much as Islamic fundamentalism, which obviously was a part of the revolution, but only one part. Indeed an Islamic republic did emerge. Gary took issue with me and I accept his response. But I wanted to make the point that the Iranian revolution might not have occurred or succeeded if it had been entirely dependent on Islamic forces. It was the flag around which a strange mixture of the dissatisfieds rallied. When Khomeini returned to Iran, many of the people who had supported the revolution were marginalized. The revolutionary regime was gradually “purified”; the so-called “Westerners” were dismissed, as was the case of the Foreign Minister who was replaced in the same month that the hostages were taken. A senior Islamic statesman called Vance in January, 1980 to tell him that the hostages would not be returned until Khomeini had put in place every element of the Islamic revolution. As shown in the book American Hostages in Iran (Council for Foreign Relations), when the last pieces of that revolution were in place—the naming of a new Foreign Minister and the convening of the new Assembly—then the US got its first feelers from Iran about the release of the hostages. Khomeini's thrust was arguably to create an Islamic republic, but the fall of the previous regime was caused by a large number of factions.

As I said, in the fall 1979, we were genuinely concerned by Islamic fundamentalism throughout the area. There were numerous threats against American diplomatic establishments in the name of Islam. The real trigger was the burning of the Chancery in Islamabad. Ostensibly that action took place because a number of extremists had occupied Mecca and the French had gone in to move them out. The radio reports in Islamabad said that it had been the Americans who had gone into Mecca; it was obviously misinformation. In any case, the radio reports triggered a mob which attacked the Chancery. Soon thereafter, I got a call from Vance asking me to come to his house. He wanted to discuss whether Americans should be evacuated from the Middle East. He agonized over it and the next morning we issued instructions to evacuate the Persian

Gulf states—not Saudi Arabia—and Pakistan. For weeks and months thereafter, I was berated by a number of Foreign Service wives, who blasted me for that decision. They insisted that nothing would happen in the Gulf States; in retrospect, they were right. But we had hostages in Iran and our Chancery in Islamabad had been burned down with some Pakistani employees killed. It was not the time to gamble; a major catastrophe could have occurred in any of the countries. I went to Dulles airport to meet the families of our people in Pakistan; that was not a pleasant experience. I fully understood why the Secretary had taken the decision that he had and fully supported him. At the same time, I was sympathetic to the evacuated families whose lives were obviously disrupted.

I think the movement has deepened since the late 1970s. Now we have the important and powerful Hamas trying to interfere with the peace process so that the two issues —fundamentalism and peace—are merging. Fortunately, in the 1970s and 1980s, the fundamentalist did not turn the Arab-Israeli into a Muslim-Jewish religious confrontation in any significant way. But Hamas brings us to the heart of the peace process. I still believe that each Islamic fundamentalist movement is an entity unto itself. I still believe, as I suggested earlier, that in most cases, persons with a political or social agenda or grievance or power seekers used Islam as a rallying cry. That is not to say that there aren't Islamic fundamentalists, but they are not the sole cause of unrest in the area or a specific country. Hamas has its own extremist purposes, but it rallies around the Islamic flag, but I don't think you can rationalize their actions in Islamic terms exclusively. I believe that you have to look at the manifestations of Islamic fundamentalism in each national or political setting if you wish to address seriously the threat that specific groups pose for your policy.

Q: Thanks, Hal, for a fascinating and informative discussions of some of the major foreign policy events of the 1960s and 70s. You certainly have witnessed and contributed significantly to some of our major foreign policy successes and episodes.

End of interview